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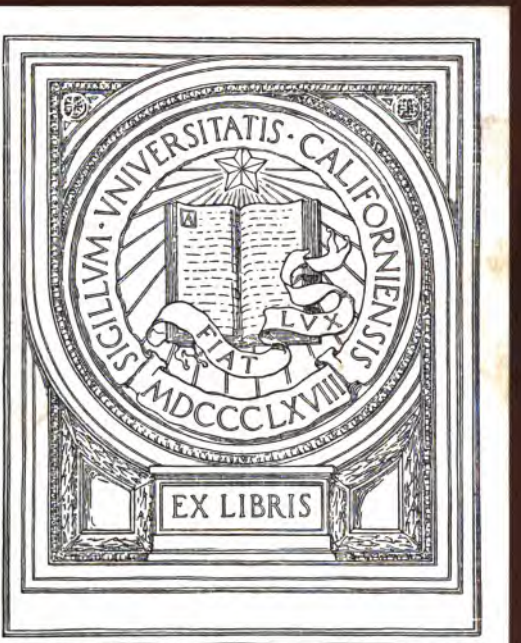
The Wreck of the Red Bird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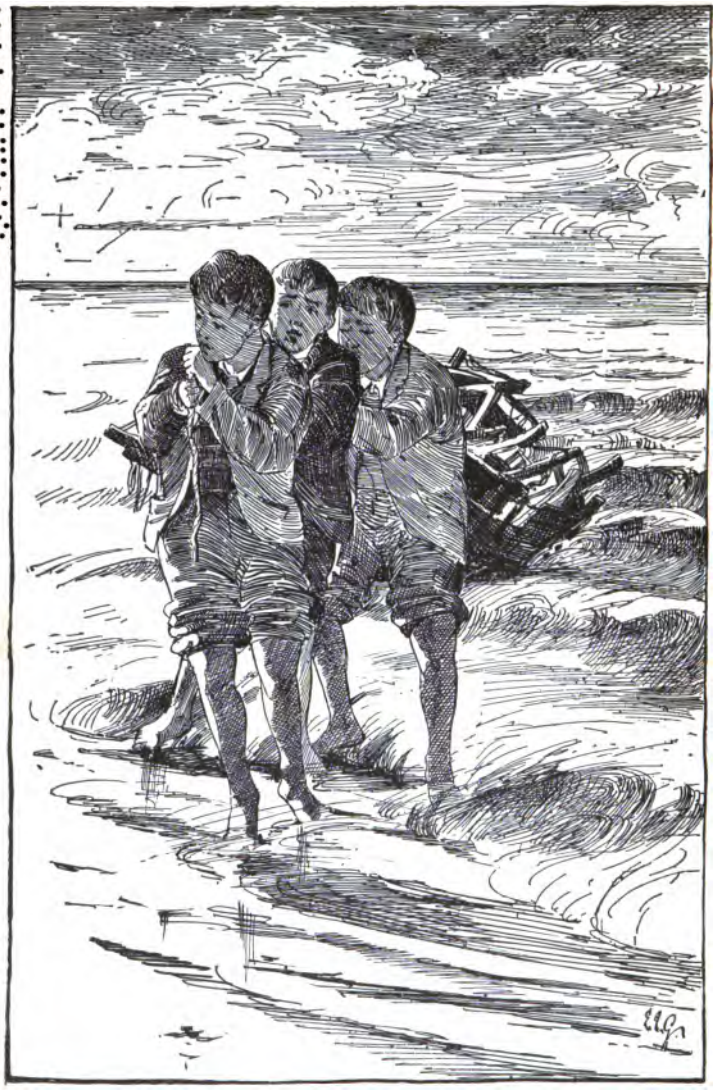

THE "BONES" OF THE RED BIRD

THE WRECK

OF

THE RED BIRD

A STORY OF THE CAROLINA COAST

BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

Author of "The Big Brother," "Captain [illegible]," "The Signal Boy," etc.

NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
27 & 29 WEST 23D STREET
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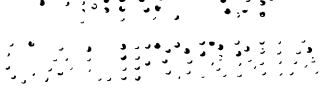

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1882

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I INTENDED to dedicate this book to my son, GUILFORD DUDLEY EGGLESTON, to whom it belonged in a peculiar sense. He was only nine years old, but he was my tenderly loved companion, and was in no small degree the creator of this story. He gave it the title it bears; he discussed with me every incident in it; and every page was written with reference to his wishes and his pleasure. There is not a paragraph here which does not hold for me some reminder of the noblest, manliest, most unselfish boy I have ever known. Ah, woe is me! He who was my companion is my dear dead boy now, and I am sure that I only act for him as he would wish, in inscribing the story that was so peculiarly his to the boy whom he loved best, and who loved him as a brother might have done. It is in memory of GUILFORD that I dedicate "The Wreck of the Red Bird" to CHARLES PELTON HUTCHINS.

G. C. E.

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The Wreck of the Red Bird

CHAPTER I.

MAUM SALLY'S MANNERS.

"BRESS my heart, honey, wha' 'd you come from?"

It was old "Maum" Sally who uttered this exclamation as she came out of her kitchen, drying her hands on her apron, and warmly greeting one of the three boys who stood just outside the door.

"Is you done come to visit de folks? Well, I do declar'!"

"Now, Maum Sally," replied Ned Cooke, "stop 'declaring' and stop asking me questions till you answer mine. Or, no, you won't do that, so I 'll answer yours first. Where did I come from? Why from Aiken, by way of Charleston and Hardeeville. Did I come to visit the folks? Well, no, not exactly that. You see, I did n't set out to come here at all. I have spent part of the summer up at Aiken

with these two school-mates of mine, and they were to spend the rest of it with me in Savannah. We were on our way down there when I got a despatch from father, saying that as yellow fever has broken out there I must n't come home, but must come down here to Bluffton and stay with Uncle Edward till frost or school time. So we got off the train, hired a man with an ox-cart to bring our trunks down, and walked the eighteen miles. The man with the trunks will get here sometime, I suppose. There! I 've made a long speech at you. Now, answer my questions, please. Where is Uncle Edward? and where is Aunt Helen? and why is the house shut up? and when will they be back again? and can't you give us something to eat, for we 're nearly starved?"

Ned laughed as he delivered this volley of questions, but Maum Sally remained perfectly solemn, as she always did. When he finished, she said:

"Yaller fever! Bress my heart! It 'll be heah nex' thing we knows. Walked all de way from Hardeeville! an' dis heah hot day too! e'en a'most starved! Well, I reckon ye is, an' I 'll jes mosey roun' heah an' git you some supper."

It must be explained that Maum Sally, although she lived on the coast of South Carolina, and was called "Maum" instead of "Aunt," was born and "raised," as she would have said, in "Ole Firginny," and her dialect was therefore somewhat as represented here. The negroes of the coast speak a peculiar jargon, which would be wholly unintelligible to other than South Carolinian readers, even if I could render it faithfully by phonetic spelling.

As Maum Sally ceased speaking, she turned to go into her kitchen, which, as is usual in the South, was a detached building, standing some distance from the main house.

"But wait, Maum Sally," cried Ned, seizing her hand; "I 'm not going to let you off that way. You have n't answered my questions yet."

"Now, look heah, young Ned," she said, with great solemnity, "does you s'pose Ole Sally was bawn and raised in Ole Firginny for nothin'? I aint forgot my manners nor hospitality, ef I *is* lived nigh onto twenty-five years in dis heah heathen coast country whah de niggas talks monkey language. I 'se a gwine to git you 'n your fr'en's—ef you 'll interduce 'em—some supper, fust an' foremost. Den

I 'll answer all de questions you 're a mind to ax, ef you don't git to conundrumin'."

Ned acknowledged Maum Sally's rebuke promptly.

"I did forget my manners," he said, "but you see I was badly flustered. This is my friend Jack Farnsworth, Maum Sally, and this," turning to the other boy, "is Charley Black. Boys, let me make you acquainted with Maum Sally, the best cook in South Carolina, or anywhere else, and the best Maum Sally in the world. She used to give me all sorts of good things to eat out here when I did n't get up to breakfast, and was expected to get on till dinner with a cold bite from the store-room. I 'll bet she 'll cook us a supper that will make your mouths water, and have it ready by the time we get the dust out of our eyes."

"Git de dus' out 'n de all over you, more like. Heah 's de key to de bath-house. You jes run down an' take a dip in de salt water, an' den git inter yer clo'es as fas' as you kin, an' when you 's done dat, you 'll fin' somethin' to eat awaitin' for you in de piazza. Git, now, quick. Ef I 'se got to plan somethin' for supper, I 'se got to hab my wits about me an' don' want no talkin' boys aroun'."

"It 's of no use, boys," said Ned. "I know Maum Sally, and we 're not going to get a word more out of her till supper is ready, so come on, let 's have a plunge. It 's all right, anyhow. My uncle and aunt have gone away for the day somewhere, I suppose, and will be back sometime to-night. If they don't come, I 'll find a way to break into the house. It 's my father's, you know, and one of my homes. In fact, I was born here. Uncle Edward lives here a good part of the time, because he likes it, and father lives in Savannah a good part of the year, because he does n't like it here. Come, let 's get a bath."

With that Ned conducted his guests to a pretty little bath-house which stood out over the water, and was approached by a green bridge. Bluffton abounds in these well-appointed, private bathing-houses, which, with their ornamental approaches, add not a little to the beauty of the singular town, which is scarcely a town at all in the ordinary sense of the word, as Ned explained to his companions while they were dressing after their bath.

"This coast country," he said, "is plagued with country fever."

"What 's country fever?" asked Jack Farnsworth.

"It 's a very severe and fatal form of bilious fever, which one night's exposure—or even a few hours' exposure after sunset—brings on."

"Then why did you bring us here?" asked Charley. "Are we to find ourselves down with country fever to-morrow morning?"

"No, not at all," replied Ned. "Country fever stays strictly at home. It never goes to town; it never visits high ground where there are pines, white sand, and no moss; and it never comes to Bluffton. That 's why there is any Bluffton. All along the coast the planters have their winter residences on their plantations, but in the summer they go off to little summer villages in the pines to escape the fever. In the region just around us, it is so much easier and pleasanter to live here in Bluffton that they build permanent residences here and live here all the year around. There is no trade here, no shops—except a blacksmith shop out on the road—no stores, no any thing except private houses, and the private houses are all built pretty nearly alike. Each stands alone in a large plot of

ground, which is filled with trees and shrubs just as all the streets are. Each house has a piazza running all the way around it, or pretty nearly that, and each has two or three joggling boards."

"What in the world is a joggling board?" asked Charley.

"I 'll introduce you when we get back to the house," said Ned.

When the boys returned to the house, Ned's prediction was abundantly fulfilled. Maum Sally had spread a tempting, if somewhat incongruous supper in the piazza. There was a piece of cold ham, some fried fresh fish, a dish of shrimps stewed with tomatoes, a great platter of rice cooked in the South Carolinian way, and intended for use in lieu of bread, some boiled okra, roast sweet potatoes, and a pot of steaming coffee. It was a miscellaneous sort of meal, compounded of breakfast, dinner, and supper in about equal proportions, but it was such a meal as three healthy boys, who had walked eighteen miles and had then taken a sea bath, were not in the least disposed to quarrel with.

"Now, Maum Sally," said Ned, after he had complimented the supper and taken his seat at the table,

"tell me where Uncle Edward and Aunt Helen are, and when they will get back?"

"Ain't ye got no manners at all, young Ned?" asked Sally, with an air of profound surprise; she always called the boy "Young Ned" when she wished to put him in awe of her; "ain't ye got no manners at all, or is you forgot 'em all sence I seed you last? Don' you know your frien's is a starvin'? and here you is a plaguin' me with questions insti'd o' helpin' on 'em. Mind yer manners, young gentleman, an' then I 'll answer yer questions."

"All right, Maum Sally," said Ned; "Charley, let me give you some cold ham. Jack, help yourself to some fish. There are the shrimps, boys, between you. Maum Sally, pour out some coffee, please. Jack, you 'll find the okra good; here, Charley, let me help you to rice."

Maum Sally, meanwhile, was pouring coffee and filling plates; when supper was well under way, she stood back a little way, placed her hands on her hips, her arms akimbo, and said with the utmost solemnity:

"Seems 's if somebody axed me somethin' or other 'bout de folks when I was too busy to ten' to

'em. Ef you 'll ax me agin now, I 'll be obleeged."

"Yes, upon reflection," said Ned, "I am inclined to think that I ventured to make some inquiry concerning my uncle and aunt. If I remember correctly, I asked where they are, and at what time they are likely to return."

"Whah is dey? Well, I don' rightly know, an' I can't say adzac'ly when dey 'll be back agin. But I specs deys somewhah out on de sea, an' I s'pose dey 'll be back about nex' November."

"What!" cried Ned, in surprise, suspending his attention to supper, and forgetting to maintain his pretence of dignified indifference. "What do you mean, Maum Sally?"

"Well, what I mean is dis heah. Yo' uncle an' aunt lef' here three days ago to go north. Dey said dey was a gwine to de centenimental expedition, an' to Newport an' somewhahs else—I reckon it was to some sort o' mountains—White Mountains, mebbe, an dey said dey 'd be back agin in November, ef dey did n't make up dere minds to stay longer, or come back afore dat time. So now you knows as much about it as I does."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE JOGGLING BOARDS.

TO say that Ned was surprised is to describe his feeling very mildly. Knowing his uncle's easy, indolent mode of life, his contentment with home, his lazy love of books and pipes and ease generally, Ned would as soon have expected to hear that the organ in the little church had gone off summering, as to learn that his uncle and aunt were travelling.

The other boys were in consternation.

"What on earth shall we do?" asked Jack Farnsworth.

"Better eat supper, fust an' fo'most," replied Maum Sally, whose theory of life consisted of a profound conviction that the important thing to be done was to eat an abundance of good food, well-cooked.

"That 's so," said Ned. "We can't bring my

uncle back by neglecting our supper, but we can let the coffee get cold, and that would be a pity. Let 's eat now while the things are hot."

"Yes," replied Charley Black, "that 's all right, but after that?"

"Why, after that we 'll try the joggling boards."

"But, Ned," remonstrated Charley, "this won't do. Your uncle has gone away, and the house is shut up and so we can't stay here. Now, I move that you go back to Aiken with us."

"Not a bit of it," answered Ned. "I 've visited at your house and at Jack's, and now you 're my guests. Do you think I 've 'forgot my manners,' as Maum Sally says?"

"But, Ned," said Jack, "you see the situation has changed since we started to go home with you. You can't go home, and now you can't stay here."

"Can't I though?" asked Ned; "and why not? I know a way into the house, and if you 'll stay where you are for five minutes, I 'll have the big doors unbarred and invite you in."

With that Ned stepped upon the piazza railing, caught a timber above, and easily swung himself up to the roof of the porch. Thence he made his way

quickly to a round window in the garret—the house was only one story high, with a high garret story for the protection of the rooms from the heat of the sun. Pushing open this round window he sprang in, descended the stairs, and a moment later the boys heard him taking down the wooden bar which kept the great double doors fast. Then drawing the bolts at top and bottom, he swung the doors open without difficulty.

"Come in, boys," he cried. "I 'll open the doors at the other side, and we 'll have a breeze through the hall."

"But I say, old fellow," said Charley, "I don't like this. What will your uncle think of us for making free with his house in this way?"

"What, Uncle Edward? Why, he would n't ask how we got in if he were to get home now. He never troubles himself, and he 's the best uncle in the world; so is Aunt Helen, or, I should say, she is the best aunt. And, besides, I tell you, this is n't Uncle Edward's house. It 's my father's, and all the furniture is his too. Uncle Edward lives here just because he likes it here, and because father likes to have him here. But the house is ours, and some-

times we all come here without warning, and stay for months. It don't make any difference, except that more plates are put on the table. Every thing goes on just the same, and if Uncle Edward were to come in now he would hardly remember that we were n't here when he went away. So make yourselves easy. You 're in my home just as much as if we were in Savannah, and there 's nobody here to be bothered by our fun. We 'll stay here and fish and row and bathe, and have a jolly time. The servants have all gone away, I suppose, except Maum Sally, but she 'll take good care of us. You see, I'm her special pet. She has thought it her duty to coddle me and scold me and regulate me generally ever since I was born, and she likes nothing better. So come on out here and I 'll introduce you unfortunate up-country boys to that greatest of human inventions, a joggling board. There are four or five of them on the front piazza."

This hospitable harangue satisfied the scruples of the boys, and the house was so pleasant, with its large, high rooms, wide hall, and broad piazzas—one of which looked out over the water,—the grounds were so tasteful, the trees so large and fine, and the

whole aspect of Bluffton was so quiet and restful, that they were glad to settle themselves contentedly after their long tramp from the railroad at Hardeeville.

"The best way to get acquainted with a joggling board," said Ned, approaching a queer-looking structure on the piazza, "is to get on it. Try it and see, Charley. Don't be afraid. It won't turn over, and it can't break down. There," as Charley seated himself upon the board, "lie down now, and move almost any muscle you please the least bit in the world, and you 'll understand what the thing is for."

"Oh! is n't it jolly!" exclaimed Charley, as the board began to sway gently under him and the breeze from the sea fanned him.

"It is all of that," replied Ned. "I 'll get some pillows as soon as I get Jack to risk his precious neck on a board, and then we 'll all be comfortable, like clams at high-tide. Jump up, Jack; it won't tip over. Now swing your legs up and lie down. There, how 's that?"

Jack gave a sigh of satisfaction, while Ned ran into the house for sofa pillows. The three boys, tired as they were, soon ceased to talk, and fell asleep to the gentle swaying of the joggling boards.

CHAPTER III.

AFLOAT.

ONCE asleep on the cool, breeze-swept piazza, the three tired boys were not inclined to wake easily. The sun went down, but still they slept. Finally the teamster from Hardeeville arrived with the trunks on an ox-cart, and his loud cries to his oxen aroused Charley, who sprang up suddenly. Forgetting that his couch was a joggling board more than three feet high he undertook to step upon the floor as if he had been sleeping on an ordinary sofa. The result was that his feet, failing to reach the floor at the expected distance, were thrown backward under the board by the forward motion of the upper part of the body, and Master Charles Black, of Aiken, fell sprawling on the floor, waking both the other boys in alarm.

"What 's up?" cried Ned.

down," replied Charley. "I
the thing would n't turn over."
said Ned. "Look and see. It's
over. Are you hurt, old fellow?"
by this time on his feet again, and
wholly free from hurt of any kind.
brought in, the driver turned over
s hospitality, and Ned declared it to

said it is!" exclaimed Jack. "Do
changes of weather *often, down here*

in twenty-four hours at this season,"
as they went into the house.
twenty-four hours! What do you

in twelve hours," answered *Ned.*
I don't understand."
ce our late summer dews have be-
ou were to go out now, you would
actually dripping from *the trees.*
on it will be *chilly* at night, almost
hot as the tropic of Cancer in
we have a sudden *change of*

temperature twice a day—once from cold to hot, and once from hot to cold."

The boys were too sleepy to talk long, and the sun was shining in at the east windows when Maum Sally waked them the next morning for a breakfast as miscellaneous as the supper had been; sliced tomatoes and figs, still wet with the dew, being prominent features of the meal.

After breakfast Ned looked up a great variety of fishing tackle and got it in order.

"Where are your fish poles?" asked one of the boys.

"Fish poles! we don't use them in salt water. We fish with tight lines."

"What are they?"

"Why, long lines with a sinker at the end and no poles."

"Do you just hold the line in your hand?"

"Certainly. And another thing that we don't use is a float. We just fish right down in the deep water—or the shallow water rather, for the best fishing is on bars where the water is n't more than twenty feet deep; but deep or shallow, the fish are at the bottom, except skip-jacks; they swim on top,

and sometimes we troll for them. They call them blue fish up North, I believe, but we call them skip-jacks or jack mackerel."

"What 's that?" asked Jack, as Ned spread out a round net for inspection.

"A cast net."

"What 's it for?"

"Shrimps."

"But I thought we were going fishing."

"So we are. But we must go shrimping first. We must have some bait."

"Oh, we are to use shrimps for bait, are we?"

"Very much so indeed," answered Ned. "They are capital bait—the best we have, unless we want to catch sheephead; then we use fiddlers."

"What are fiddlers?"

"Little black crabs that run about by millions over the sand. They have hard shells that whiting and croakers can't crack, while the sheephead, having good teeth, crush them easily. So when we want to catch sheephead, and don't want to be bothered with other fish, we bait with fiddlers."

"Then I understand that fish are so plentiful here and so easily caught that they bother you when you

want to catch particular kinds?" said Jack, incredulously.

"If you mean that for a question," answered Ned "I 'll let you answer it for yourself after you 've had a little experience."

"Well, if we don't get any shrimps," said Charley, "we 'll fish for sheephead with musicians."

"Musicians? oh, you mean fiddlers," said Ned. "But we 'll get shrimps enough."

"Do they bother you, too, with their abundance?" asked Jack, still inclined to joke his friend.

"Come on and see," said Ned, who had now prepared himself for wading.

Taking the cast net in his hand, and giving a pail to Jack, he led the way to the sea. Wading into the mouth of a little inlet he cast the net, which was simply a circular piece of netting, with a string of leaden balls around the edge. From this lead line cords extended on the under side of the net to and through a ring in the centre where they were fastened to a long cord which was held in Ned's hand. A peculiar motion in casting caused the net to spread itself out flat and to fall in that way on the water. The leaden balls caused it to sink at once to

the bottom, the edges reaching bottom first, of course, and imprisoning whatever happened to be under the net in its passage. After a moment's pause, to give time for the lead line to sink completely, Ned jerked the cord and began to draw in. Of course this drew the lead line along the bottom to the centre ring, and made a complete pocket of the net, securely holding whatever was caught in it.

It came up after this first cast with about a hundred shrimps—of the large kind called prawn in the North—in it. The boys opened their eyes in surprise, and Ned cast again, bringing up this time about twice as many as before.

"They have hardly begun to come in yet," said Ned. "The tide is too young."

"Hardly begun to come in?" said Jack, "why, the water 's alive with them. Let me throw the net."

"Certainly," said Ned, "if you know how."

"Know how? Why, there 's no knack in that; anybody can do it."

With this confident boast Jack took the net and gave a violent cast. Neglecting to relax the rope at the right moment, however, the confident young

gentleman made trouble for himself. The lead line swung around rapidly, the net wrapped itself around Jack, and the leaden balls struck him with sufficient violence to hurt. He lost his balance at the same instant, and, his legs being held close together by the wet net, he could not step out to recover himself. The result was that he fell sprawling into the water and was fished out in a very wet condition by his companions.

Jack was a boy capable of seeing the fun even in an accident of which he was the victim. He stood still while the net was unwound, and for a moment afterward. Then, seeing that the other boys were too considerate to laugh at him while in trouble, he quietly said:

"I told you I could do it."

"Well, you caught more in the net than I did," said Ned. "Now take hold again and I 'll show you how to manage it. Your wet clothes won't hurt you. Sea-water does n't give one cold."

A few lessons made Jack fairly expert in casting, but Charley had no mind to court mishaps, and would not try his skill. The pail was soon well filled with shrimps, and the boys returned to the boat

house, where Jack changed his wet clothes for dry ones.

Then all haste was made to get the boat out, in order that they might fish while the tide was right. The boat was a large launch named *Red Bird;* a boat twenty-four feet long, very broad in the beam, and very stoutly built. It was provided with a mast and sail, but these were of no use now as there was no wind; and the bars on which Ned meant to fish were only a few hundred yards distant.

No sooner was the anchor cast than the lines were out, and the fish began accepting the polite invitation extended to them.

"What sort of fish are these, Ned?" asked Charley, as he took one from his hook.

"That," said Ned, looking round, "is a whiting—so called, I believe, because it is brown, and yellow, and occasionally pink and purple, with changeable silk stripes over it. That 's the only reason I can think of for calling it a whiting. It is never white. It is n't properly a whiting for that matter. It is n't at all the same as the whiting of the North, at any rate."

"Why, they 're changing color," exclaimed Jack.

"LOOK OUT! HOLD THAT FELLOW AWAY FROM YOU!"

"Look! they actually change color under your very eyes."

"Yes, it 's a way whiting have," said Ned. "And some other fish do the same thing, I believe."

"Dolphins do," said Charley.

"Yes, but the whiting is n't even a second cousin to the dolphin. That 's a croaker you 've got, Jack; spot on his tail—splendid fish to eat—and he croaks. Listen!"

The fish did begin to utter a curious croaking sound, which surprised the boys. Other croakers were soon in the boat, and the company of them set up a croaking of which the inhabitants of a frog pond might not have been ashamed.

"They call croakers 'spot' in Virginia," said Ned, because of the spot near the tail. Look at it. Is n't it pretty? and is n't the fish itself a beauty?"

"But the whiting is prettier," said Charley; "at least in colors. I say, Ned, do you know if whiting ever dine on kaleidoscopes?"

"Look out! hold that fellow away from you! hold the line at arm's length and don't let the brute strike you with his tail for your life!" exclaimed Ned, excitedly, as Charley drew a curious-looking creature up.

"What is the thing?" asked both the up-country boys in a breath.

"A stingaree," replied Ned, "and as ugly as a rattlesnake. See how viciously he strikes with his tail! Let him down slowly till his tail touches the bottom of the boat. There! Now wait till he stops striking for a moment and then clap your foot on his tail. Ah! now you 've got him. Now cut the tail off close to the body and the fellow 's harmless."

"What is the creature anyhow?" asked Jack, who had suspended his fishing operations to observe the monster. "What did you call it?"

"Well, the gentleman belongs to a large and distinguished family. To speak broadly, he is a plagiostrome chondropterygian, of the sub-order *raiiæ*, commonly called skates. To define him more particularly, he is a member of the trygonidæ family, familiarly known as sting rays, and called by negroes and fishermen, and nearly every body else on the coast, stingarees."

"Where on earth did you get that jargon from?" asked Charley.

"It is n't jargon, and I got it from my uncle. He told me one day not to call these things stingarees,

but sting rays, and then for fun rattled off a lot of scientific talk at me, which I made him repeat until I knew it by heart. What I know about sting rays is this : there are a good many kinds of them in different quarters of the world. In the North they have the American sting ray, which is much larger than ours down here, though we sometimes catch them two or three feet wide. Ours is the European sting ray, I believe ; at any rate, it is n't the American. They are all of them closely alike. They are brown on top and white beneath. You see the shape—not unlike that of a turtle, but with something like wings at the sides, and with a skin instead of a shell, and no legs. The most interesting things about them are their long, slender tails. See," picking up the amputated tail and turning it over ; "see the gentleman's weapons. Those bony spikes, with their barbed sides, make very ugly wounds whenever the sting ray gets a good shot at a leg or an arm. The negroes say the barbs are poisonous, like a rattlesnake's fangs ; but the scientific folk dispute that. However that may be, a man was laid up for three months right here in Bluffton, during the war, with a foot so bad that the surgeons thought

they would have to cut it off, and all from a very slight wound by a sting ray."

"Ugh!" cried Jack. "It is n't necessary to suppose poison; to have one of those horrible bones driven into your flesh and then drawn out with the notches all turned the wrong way, is enough to make any amount of trouble, without adding poison."

"Perhaps that accounts for the stories told of the Indians shooting poisoned arrows," said Ned. "They used sting-ray stings for arrow-heads at any rate."

"And very capital arrow-heads they would make," said Charley, examining the spikes, which were about the size of a large lead-pencil, about three or four inches long, and barbed all along the sides, so that they looked not unlike rye beards under a microscope. These spikes are placed not at the end of the tail. but near the middle.

"Are sting rays good to eat?" asked Jack, examining the slimy, flabby creature.

"It all depends upon the taste of the eater," replied Ned. "The negroes sometimes eat the flaps or wings, and most white people on the coast have curiosity enough to taste them. They always say

there 's nothing bad about the taste, but I never knew anybody to take to sting rays as a delicacy. Some people say that alligator steaks are good, and a good many people eat sharks now and then. For my part good fish are too plentiful here for me to experiment with bad ones."

The fishing was resumed now, and it was not long before Jack confessed that the fish were beginning to "bother" him by their abundance and eagerness.

"Ned," he said, "I apologize. If you 've any fiddlers about your clothes, I believe I 'll confine my attention to sheephead; I 'm tired of pulling fish in."

"Well, let 's go ashore, then," said Ned, laughing, "and have dinner."

"Do fish bite in that way generally down here?" asked Charley.

"Yes, when the tide is n't too full. Fishing really gets to be a bore here, it is so easy to fill a boat; anybody can do that as easily as throw a cast net."

"Now hush that," said Charley. "Jack has owned up and apologized, and agreed that he knows more than he did this morning."

CHAPTER IV.

PLANS AND PREPARATIONS.

AFTER dinner the boys lolled upon the piazza, and Ned answered his companions' questions concerning Bluffton and region round about.

"The water here is called South May River," he said, "but why, I don't know. It certainly is n't a river. This whole coast is a ragged edge of land with all sorts of inlets running up into it, and with islands, big and little, dotted about off the mainland. Yonder is Hilton Head away over near the horizon. Hunting Island lies off to the left, and Bear's Island further away yet. The little marsh islands have no names. They are simply bars of mud on which a kind of rank grass, call salt marsh, grows. Some of them are covered by every tide; others only by spring-tides, while others are covered by all except neap-tides."

"Is there any land over that way, to the right of Hilton Head?" Charley asked.

"Good idea!" exclaimed Ned. "I say, let 's go buffalo-hunting and crusoeing and yachting all at once."

"What sort of answer is that nonsense to my question?" asked Charley, with mock dignity and real doubt as to his friend's meaning.

"Well, I jumped a little, that 's all," said Ned. "Your question suggested my answer. Bee Island lies over there, out of sight. It 's my uncle's land. It used to be a sea-island plantation, but was abandoned during the war and has never been occupied since. It has grown up and is as wild as if it had never been cultivated at all. The cattle were left on it when the place was abandoned, and they went completely wild. During the war parties of soldiers from both sides used to go over there to hunt the wild cattle. Sometimes they met each other and hunted each other instead of the cattle. Now it just occurred to me that we might have jolly fun by fitting out an expedition, sailing over there in the *Red Bird* —you see these land-locked waters are never very rough or dangerous—and camping there as long as

we like. When we are in the boat, we will be yachtsmen of the 'swellest' sort; when we 're on the desert island—or deserted, rather, for it is desert only in the past tense—we 'll be Robinson Crusoes; and when we want beef we 'll kill a wild cow, if there are any left, and be buffalo hunters, for what 's a buffalo but a sort of wild cow?"

"Is the fishing good over there?" asked Jack, "for I 'm not so much bothered by the fish yet that I want to quit catching them."

"As good as here."

"All right, let 's go," said Jack.

"So say I," responded Charley. "When shall we start?"

"To-morrow morning. It will take all this afternoon to get ready," said Ned.

With that they set to work collecting necessary materials.

"We must have all sorts of things," said Ned.

"Yes," answered Jack, "particularly in our characters as Robinson Crusoes."

"How 's that?" asked Charley. "He had nothing. He was shipwrecked, you know."

"Yes, I know. But did you never notice what

extraordinary luck he had? Absolutely every thing that was indispensable to him came ashore or was brought ashore from that accommodating wreck. Why, he even got gunpowder enough to last him, and whatever the ship did n't yield the island did. I always suspected that Robinson Crusoe loaded that ship himself with special reference to his needs on the island, and picked out the right island, and then ran the ship on the rocks purposely."

This interpretation of Robinson Crusoe's character and life was a novel one to Jack's companions; but their plan for their expedition did not include any purpose to deny themselves needed conveniences.

The large duck gun was taken down from its hooks in the hall, and a good supply of ammunition was put into the shot pouches and powder flask. This included one pouch of buckshot and one of smaller shot for fowls. The fishing tackle was already in the boat house, as we know. An axe, a hatchet, a piece of bacon, to be used in frying fish, a small bag of rice, another of flour, and another of sweet potatoes, a box of salt, another of sugar—both water-tight,—and some coffee, completed the list of stores as planned by the boys. Maum Sally con-

templated the collection, after the boys had declared it to be complete, and exclaimed ·

"Well, I 'clar now!"

"What 's the matter, Maum Sally?" asked Ned.

"Nothin', on'y it 's jis zacly like a passel o' boys, dat is."

"What is?"

"W'y wot for is you a takin' things to eat?" asked Sally.

"Because we 'll want to eat them," said Ned.

"Raw?" asked Sally.

"That's so," said Ned, with a look of confusion. "Boys, we have n't put in a single cooking utensil!"

Laughing at their blunder, the boys set about choosing from Maum Sally's stores what they thought was most imperatively needed. Two skillets, one to be used for frying and the other for baking bread; a kettle, to be used in boiling rice, in heating water for coffee, and as a bread pan in which to mix corn bread; a coffee pot; some tin cups; three forks and three plates, constituted their outfit.

Each boy had his pocket knife, of course, and Ned had put into the boat a large hunting knife from the house.

When all was stored ready for the morning's departure, the boys ate their supper and betook themselves to the piazza.

"I hope there 'll be a fair breeze in the morning," said Ned, "for it will be a frightful job to row that big boat to Bee Island if there is n't wind enough to sail."

"How far is it?" asked Jack.

"About a dozen miles. But there is nearly always breeze enough to sail, after we get away from the bluffs here; but the tide will be against us."

"How do you know?" asked Charley.

"Why it will begin running up about eight o'clock to-morrow, and of course it won't turn till about two."

"How do yon know it will begin running up about eight o'clock?"

"Why, because it began running up a little after seven this morning."

"Well, what has that got to do with it? Don't it all depend on the wind?"

"What a landlubber you are!" exclaimed Ned. "No, it don't depend on the wind. It depends on the moon and the sun. I 'll try to explain."

"No, don't," said Jack; "let him read about it in his geography, or explain it to him some other time. Tell us about something else now. Is n't the country fever likely to bother us over there on the island?"

"No, not if we select a good place to camp in. We must get on pretty high ground near the salt water. I know the look of healthy and unhealthy places pretty well, and we 'll be safe enough."

"All right. When we get into camp you can deliver that lecture on tides if you want to, but just now we would n't attend to it. We 're apt to be a trifle cross in the evenings over there if we get tired. Tired people in camp are always cross, and it will be just as well to save whatever you have to say till we need something to talk about. Then you can tell us all about it."

"Well, now, I 've something interesting to tell you without waiting," said Ned; "something very interesting."

"What is it?"

"That it is after nine o'clock; that we want to get up early; and that we 'd better go to bed."

"Agreed," said his companions.

CHAPTER V.

THE SAILING OF THE "RED BIRD."

THE boys were out of bed not long after daylight the next morning. The sky was clear, but there was not a particle of breeze, and even before the sun rose the air was hot and stifling to a degree never before experienced by either of Ned's visitors.

"I say, Ned, this is a frightful morning," said Jack. "I feel myself melting as I stand here in my clothes. I 'm already as weak as a pound of butter looks in the sun. How we 're going to breathe when the sun comes up, I 'm at a loss to determine. Whew!" and with that Jack sat down exhausted.

"A nice time we 'll have rowing," said Charley. "I move we swim and push the boat. It 'll be cooler, and not much harder work. Does it ever rain here? because if it does I 'm waiting for a show-

er. I 'm wilted down, and nothing short of a drenching will revive me."

"Well," said Ned, "come, let 's take a drenching. I 'm going to take a header off the boat-house pier. It 's low-water now, and there 's a clear jump of ten feet. A plunge will wake us up, and by that time breakfast will be ready, and what is more to the point, the tide will turn. That 's a comfort."

"Why?" asked Charley.

"Because when it turns a sea-breeze will come with it. This sort of heat is what we 'd have here all summer long if it was n't for land- and sea-breezes. As it is we never have it except at dead low water, and it is always followed by a good stiff sea-breeze when the tide turns. We 'll be able to sail instead of swimming over to the island. But come, let 's have our plunge now."

After breakfast the boys went to the boat house to bestow their freight in the boat. The tide had turned, and, as Ned had predicted, a cool, stimulating breeze had begun to blow, so that the strength returned to Jack's knees and Charley's resolution.

"It will be best to fill the boat's water kegs," said Ned; "partly because we 'll want water on the

way, partly because we 'll want water on the island, while we 're digging for a permanent supply."

" By the way," said Jack, " what are we going to dig with? "

" Well, there 's another blunder," said Ned. " If Robinson Crusoe had forgotten things in that way, he never would have lived through his island experiences. We must have a shovel and a pick. I 'll run up to the house and look for them while you boys fill the water kegs."

When Ned got back to the boat he was confronted by Maum Sally with a big bundle.

" What is it, Maum Sally? "

" Oh nothin', on'y I spose you young gentlemen is a gwine to sleep jes a little now an' then o' nights, an' so, as you has n't thought on it yerse'fs, I 's done brung you some bedclo'es."

" Now look here, boys," said Ned; " we 'll go off without out heads yet We 've lost our heads several times already, in fact. There 's nothing for it except just to imagine ourselves at the island, and run through a whole day and night in our minds to see what we 're going to need."

" That 's a good idea," said Charley. " I 'll begin.

I 'll need my mother the first thing, because here 's a button off my collar."

The party laughed, of course, but there was force in the suggestion. A few buttons, a needle or two, and some stout thread were straightway added to the ship's stores.

"Now let 's see," said Ned. "We 'll need to build a shelter first thing, and we 've all the tools necessary for that, because I 've thought it out carefully. Then we have our digging tools. Very well. Now, for breakfast we need, let me see," and he ran over the materials and utensils already enumerated. Going on in this way through an imaginary day on the island, the boys found their list of stores now reasonably complete. From Maum Sally's bundle they selected three blankets, which they rolled up tight and bestowed behind the water keg at the stern. Maum Sally had brought pillows, sheets, and a large mattress, which she earnestly besought them to take, but they declined to add to their cargo any thing which could be dispensed with. At the very last moment one of the boys thought of matches. It was decided that three small boxes would be sufficient, as they could keep fire by the exercise of a little caution.

Thus equipped, they bade Maum Sally good-by, and cast the boat loose. The sail filled, the *Red Bird* lay a little over upon one side, with the wind nearly abeam, and the boys settled themselves into their places.

"I say, young Ned," called Maum Sally, "how long 's ye mean to be gone?"

"Oh, I don't know. May be a month," was the reply.

"Well, not a day longer 'n dat, now mind."

CHAPTER VI.

ODD FISH.

THE sea-breeze was fresh and full, and it blew from a favorable quarter. There were various windings about among the small islands to be made, and now and then the course for a brief distance was against the wind, and as this was the case only where the channel was narrow, it was necessary to make a series of very short "tacks," which gave Ned an opportunity to instruct his companions in the art of sailing a boat. In the main, however, there was an abundance of sea-room, and Ned could lay his course directly for Bee Island and keep the wind on the quarter. It was barely eleven o'clock, therefore, when the *Red Bird* came to her moorings on the island, and the boys went ashore.

"Now the first thing that Robinson Crusoe did after he got his wits about him," said Jack, "was to

build his residence. Let 's follow the example of that experienced mariner, and choose our building-site before we begin to bring away things from the wreck ; I mean, before we unload our plunder."

" Yes, that 's our best plan," said Ned. " We don't want to do any more carrying than we must. Let me see. We 're on the north side of the island. If I remember right, the negro quarters used to be to the east of this spot, and the negroes must have got water from somewhere, so we 'd better look for the ruins of that African Troy, in search of the ancient reservoirs."

" How far from the shore were the quarters ? " asked Charley.

" I don't remember, if I ever knew ; but why ? "

" Well, it seems to me this island has grown up somewhat as the hair on your head does, in a shock. The large trees, as nearly as I can make out, think six feet or so to be a proper interval between themselves, and the small trees have disposed themselves to the best of their ability between the big ones ; then all kinds of vines have grown up among the big and little trees, as if to make a sort of shrimp-net of the woods, and cane has grown up just to occupy

any vacant spaces that might be left. It occurs to me that if we 're to hunt anywhere except along shore for the old quarters, we 'd best make up our minds to clear the island as we go."

"I say, Charley," said Jack, "if you were obliged to clear an acre of this growth with your own hands what would you do first?"

"I 'd get a good axe, a grubbing hoe, some matches, and kindling wood; then I 'd take a good look at the thicket; and then I'd take a long, long rest."

"Yes, I suppose you 'd need it. But that is n't what I meant. Never mind that, however. Ned, I don't see why this is n't as good a place as any for our camp. There 's a sort of bluff here, and we can clear away a place for our hut and get the hut built with less labor than it would take to find traces of negro quarters that were destroyed twelve or fifteen years ago."

"Yes, but how about water?"

"Well, I don't think it likely that we 'd find any visible remains of a well in the other place, and if we did we 'd have to dig it all out again. Why not dig here?"

After some discussion, and the examination of the shore for a short distance in each direction, this suggestion was adopted. The building of a shelter was easy work. It was necessary only to erect a framework of poles, to cut bushes and place them against the sides for walls, and to cover the whole with palmete leaves—that is to say, with the leaves of a species of dwarf palm which grows in that region in abundance. These leaves are known to persons at the North only in the form of palm-leaf fans. On the coast of South Carolina they grow in all the swamps and woodlands.

A little labor made a bunk for the boys to sleep upon, and while Ned and Charley filled it with long gray Spanish moss, Jack got dinner ready, first rowing out from shore and catching fish enough for that meal while his companions finished the house.

"Now," said Jack, when dinner was over and the boys had stretched themselves out for a rest, "it 's nearly sunset, and we 're all tired. We 've got the best part of two kegs of water left, so I move that we don't begin digging our well till morning."

"Agreed," said the other boys, glad enough to be idle.

"Now, I 've got something I want you to tell me about," said Jack. "Two things, in fact." With that, he went to the boat and looked about. Presently he came back and said :

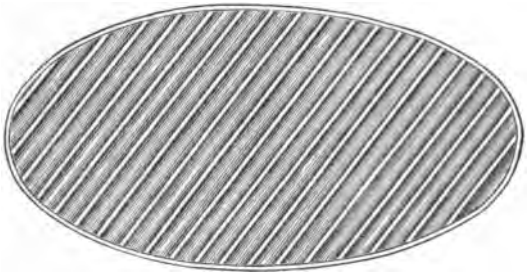
"One of 'em 's dried up. Here 's the other."

He handed Ned a queer-looking fish, almost black, about eight inches long, very slender, and very singularly shaped.

"See," he said; "its jaw protrudes in so queer a way that I can't make out which side of the creature is top and which bottom. Turn either side you please up, and it looks as if you ought to turn the other up instead ; and then the thing has a sort of match-lighter on top of his head, or on the bottom— I don't know which it is. Look."

He pointed to the creature's head. There was a flat, oval figure there, made by a ridge in the skin, and the flat space enclosed within this oval line was crossed diagonally by other ridges, arranged with perfect regularity. The whole looked something like the figure on the opposite page.

"Now, what I want to know," said Jack, "is what sort of fish this is, which side of him belongs on top, and what use he makes of this match-lighter."



"I 'm afraid I can't help you much," said Ned. "A year ago I would have told you at once that the fish is a shark's pilot, so called because he follows ships as sharks do, and the sailors think he acts as a pilot for the sharks. But now I don't know what to call it."

"Why not?" asked Charley.

"Because I don't know. I 've been reading up in the cyclopædias and natural histories and ichthyologies about our fishes down here, and have found out that whatever I know is n't so."

"Why, how 's that?"

"Well, take the whiting, for example. When I

began reading up to see if there was any sort of cousinship between him and the dolphin, I soon found that the whiting is n't a whiting at all, but I could n't find out any thing else about him. The whiting described in the books is a sort of codfish's cousin, and he lives only at the North. Neither the pictures nor the descriptions of him at all resemble our whiting, so I don't know what sort of fish our whiting is. I only know that he is n't a whiting, and is n't the remotest relation to the dolphin, because he is a fish and has scales, while the dolphin is a cetacean."

"What 's a cetacean?" asked Charley.

"A vertebrated, mammiferous marine animal."

"Well; go on; English all that."

'Well, whales, dolphins narwhals, and porpoises are the principal cetaceans. They are not fish, but marine animals, and they suckle their young."

"Well, that 's news to me," said Charley.

"Now, then," said Jack, "if you two have finished your little side discussion, suppose we come back to the subject in hand. What do you know, Ned, about this fish that I have in my hand, and why don't you call him a shark's pilot now, as you say you did a year ago?"

"Why, because the books treat me the same way in his case that they do in the whiting's. They describe a shark's pilot which is as different from this as a whale is from a heifer calf, and so I don't know what to call this fellow. Did he make a fight when you caught him?"

"Indeed he did. I was sure I had a twenty-pound something or other on my hook, and when I pulled up this insignificant little creature, with the match box on his head, I was disgusted. I looked at him to see if he had n't a steam-engine somewhere about him, because he pulled so hard, and that 's what made me observe his match box and his curious up-side-down-itiveness."

"I say, Ned," said Charley, "why is it that our Southern fishes are so neglected in the books?"

"Well, I 've asked myself that question, and the only answer I can think of is this: in the first place, there is no great commercial interest in fishing here as there is at the North; and then the natural history books and the cyclopædias are all written at the North or in Europe, and so there are thousands of curious fish down here which are not mentioned. There 's the pin-cushion fish, for example. I can't

find a trace of that curious creature in any of the books."

"What sort of thing is a pin-cushion fish?" asked Jack.

"He 's simply a hollow sphere, a globular bag about twice the size of a walnut, and as round as a base ball."

"Half transparent, is he? Red, shaded off into white? with water inside of him, and pimples, like pin-heads, all over him, and eyes and mouth right on his fair rotundity, making him look like a picture of the full moon made into a human face?" asked Jack eagerly.

"Yes, that 's the pin-cushion fish."

"I thought so. That 's my other one," said Jack.

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"Why, that 's the other thing I had to show you, but could n't find. I caught him with the cast net"

"And kept him to show to me?" asked Ned.

"Yes, but he disappeared."

"Of course he did. He spat himself away."

"How 's that?"

"Why, if you take a pin-cushion fish out of the

water, and put him down on a board, he 'll sit there looking like a judge for a little while; then he 'll begin to spit, and when he spits all the water out, there 's nothing left of him except a small lump of jelly. They 're very curious things. I wish we had a good popular book about our Southern fishes and the curious things that live in the water here on the coast."

"Don't you suppose these things are represented at all in scientific books?" asked Jack.

"I suppose that many of them are, but many of them are not, and those that are described, are described by names that we know nothing about, and so only a naturalist could find the descriptions or recognize them when found. With all Northern fishes that are familiarly known, the case is different. If a Northern boy wants to find out more than he knows already about a codfish, he looks for the information under the familiar name 'Codfish,' and finds it there. He does not need to know in advance that the cod is a fish of the *Gadus* family, and the *Morrhua vulgaris* species. So, when he wants to know about the whiting that he is familiar with, he finds the informa-

tion under the name whiting; but the scientific men who wrote the books, however much they may know about the fish that we call whiting, do not know, I suppose, that it is anywhere called whiting, and so they don't put the information about it under that head. They only come down South as far as New Jersey, and tell about a species of fish which is there called whiting, though it is n't the real whiting. If they had known that still another and a very different fish goes by that name down here, they would have told us about that too, in the same way."

"What 's the remedy?" asked Charley.

"For you, or Jack, or me," answered Ned, "to study science, and to make a specialty of our Southern fishes. When we do that and give the world all the information we can get by really intelligent observation, all the scientific writers will welcome the addition made to the general store of knowledge. That is the way it has all been found out."

"Why can't we begin now?"

"Because we have n't learned how to observe. We don't know enough of general principles to be able to understand what we see. Let 's form habits of observation, and let 's study science systemati-

cally; after that we can observe intelligently, and make a real contribution to knowledge."

"You 're not going to write your book on the Marine Fauna of the Southern States to-night, are you?" asked Jack.

"No, certainly not," said Ned, with a laugh at his own enthusiasm.

"Then let 's go to bed; I 'm sleepy," said Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ENEMY IN THE CAMP.

THE three tired boys went to sleep easily enough, and the snoring inside their hut gave fair promise of a late waking the next day. But before long Jack became restless in his sleep, and began to toss about a good deal. Charley seemed to catch his restlessness, and presently he sat up in the bunk and began to slap himself. This thoroughly aroused him, and as Jack and Ned were tossing about uneasily he had no scruple in speaking to them.

"I say, fellows, we 're attacked."

"What 's the matter?" muttered Ned, at the same time beginning to rub himself vigorously, first on one part of the body, then on another.

"Mosquitoes," said Jack, violently rubbing his scalp.

"Worse than mosquitoes," said Charley; "they

feel more like yellow jackets or hornets, I should say; and they 're inside our clothes too."

"Whew!" exclaimed Ned, leaping out of the bunk, "I did n't think of that."

"What is it?" asked both the other boys in a breath.

"A swarm of sand-flies."

"Sand-flies! what are they?" asked Jack.

"Wait, and I 'll show you," replied Ned, going out and stirring up the fire so as to make a light. Meantime the boys rubbed and writhed and turned themselves about in something like agony, for, though they suffered no severe pain at any one spot, their whole bodies seemed to be covered with red pepper. Every inch of their skins was inflamed, and the more they rubbed the worse the irritation became.

When Ned had made a bright light, he showed his companions what their tormentors were. Jack and Charley saw some very minute flying insects—true flies indeed—not much larger than the points of pins. There were millions of the creatures. The whole air seemed full of them indeed, and wherever one rested for a moment upon the skin of its victim,

there was at once a pricking sensation, followed by the intolerable burning and irritation already mentioned.

Charley was at first incredulous. "You don't mean to tell me," he said, "that those little gnats have done all this."

"Yes, I do," answered Ned, "and more than that, I have known them to kill a horse, tormenting him to death in a few hours. They 'll get under a horse's hair by millions and literally cover him, until you can see the hair move with them. But they are not gnats."

"But, see here, Ned," said Jack; "when I barely touch one of the creatures, it not only kills him but distributes him pretty evenly over the surrounding surface. They have n't strength enough to hang together."

"Yes, I know," replied Ned; "what of that?"

"Why, how can such things bite so? and especially how can they force their way through our blankets and clothes? I should think they 'd tear themselves to pieces in the attempt."

"So should I, if I did n't know better; but as a matter of fact they do manage to get through without dulling their teeth, as we have proof."

"Have the creatures teeth?" asked Charley.

"No, of course not; but they have a sort of rasping apparatus which is just as bad. They have an acrid kind of saliva too, which they put into the wounds they make, and that is what smarts so. But come, this won't do. We must make a good smudge."

"What 's a smudge?" asked Jack.

"I 'll show you presently," answered Ned, while he began to build a small fire immediately in front of the tent. When it had burned a little, he smothered it with damp leaves and moss, so that it gave off a dense cloud of smoke which quickly filled the hut.

"Now the tent will soon be clear of them," said Ned.

"Sand-flies object to smoke, I suppose," said Jack.

"Very much indeed," answered Ned, "and it is customary here on the coast to have a pair of smudge boxes in front of every house."

"I don't blame them for objecting," grumbled Charley, coughing and wiping his smoke-inflamed eyes; "I can't say that I find smoke the most delightful atmosphere myself. But what is a 'smudge box,' Ned?"

"Simply a shallow box of earth set upon a post, to build a smudge upon."

"I say, Ned," asked Jack, "what do you mean by saying that sand-flies are n't gnats?"

"Simply that they are n't," said Ned.

"What are they, then?"

"Flies."

"Well, what is a small fly but a gnat?"

"And what is a gnat but a small fly?" added Charley.

"The two are not at all the same thing," answered Ned. "That is a popular mistake. I have heard people say they could stand mosquitoes, but could n't endure gnats; and yet the mosquito is a gnat, and what these people call gnats are not gnats at all, but simply small flies."

"What constitutes the exact difference?"

"The shape of the body. All flies are two-winged insects, and gnats are flies in that sense, of course; but gnats are those flies that have long bodies behind their wings, to balance themselves with. Mosquitoes are our best example of them. These sand flies, you see, have very short bodies."

"Yes, but very long bills, I fancy," said Charley.

"Well," said Jack, "all that is news to me."

"I suppose it is. Most people think a whale is a fish, too, but for all that it is nothing of the kind. What are you doing, Charley?"

"Tossing up heads or tails for it," answered Charley, who had left the tent and gone to the large fire.

"Tossing up for what?"

"To determine the method and manner of my death," answered Charley, with profound gravity. "If I stay in the hut I shall die of suffocation in the smoke, and if I stay out here the sand flies will kill me. I can't quite make up my mind which death I prefer, so I 'm tossing up for it."

"Good! there 's a breeze," said Ned; "if it rises it 'll relieve you of the necessity of choosing."

"How? By blowing the smoke away, and so giving the sand flies a fair field?"

"No; by blowing the sand flies away; they can't stand much of a breeze. It is coming up, too, and we shall get some sleep after all."

The breeze did indeed rise after a time, but the dawn was almost upon them before the boys really

slept again, so severely were their skins irritated by their small enemies.

They had learned a lesson, however, and during the rest of their stay on the island they never neglected to make a smudge in front of the hut before attempting to sleep. It was not often that the sand flies appeared in such numbers as on this night, and hence it was not often necessary to fill the tent too full of smoke for comfort.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNING AND END OF A VOYAGE.

THE first care of the boys the next morning was to dig their well. This was a comparatively trifling task, as they had only to dig four or five feet through soft alluvial soil and sand. Instead of making perpendicular sides to their well, they dug it out in the shape of a bowl, so that they could walk down to the water and dip it up as they needed it.

Having a hut to live in and a well from which to get fresh water, they were now free to begin the sport for which they had come to the island. They went fishing first, of course, that being the obvious thing to do, but after a few hours of this the tide became too full, and the fish ceased to bite satisfactorily.

"Let 's crusoe a little," said Jack, winding up his line.

"In what particular way?" asked Ned.

"Why, let 's sail around our domain and see how the island looks on its other sides. Perhaps we may discover the savages, or find some game."

"A good idea; but we must go back to camp first, to leave our fish and get the gun and the sail; and while we 're there we 'd better get some dinner."

So said, so done. Dinner was very hastily dispatched, as the boys were anxious to get off, in order that the circuit of the island might be completed before night.

"It looks like rain," said Ned, as he shook out the sail, "but we don't mind a wetting."

There was a good breeze, and the boat bounded away, rocking a good deal, for the wind had been blowing all day, and there was more sea on than was usual in those quiet waters. Ned let the centre-board down, which steadied the boat somewhat, and enabled her to carry her sail without danger. The plan was to coast along about half a mile off shore in order that the island might be seen to good advantage; but as the eastern shore was reached the sea became heavier, and the roar of the

surf on shore warned Ned of broad sands upon that side.

"I 've got to make more offing here," he said.

"What do you mean by that? turn it into English," said Charley Black, who persistently refused to understand any thing that sounded like a nautical term.

"Well, I mean I 've got to sail farther away from the shore."

"'Cause why?" asked Jack.

"Because of two things," replied Ned. "In the first place the sea comes in between those two islands over there, and has a fair sweep at about half a mile of our island's coast, and so for the next half mile we shall have some pretty rough water, and I prefer to be well off shore."

"I should think you 'd prefer to be close inshore if there 's danger. Then if any thing happens we can land."

"That 's all you know about it," said Ned. "I don't think there 's the least danger, so long as we keep off shore, because this boat, with her centre-board down, is seaworthy; but as she is n't beach-worthy—and no vessel is that—I don't want to get

her upon a beach. That brings me to my second reason. I want to take a good offing, because by the way the surf roars here, and by the look of it, I judge that there 's a long sandy beach running out from this part of the island, and I don't want to risk getting into too shallow water."

"But why could n't we land if there were danger?" asked Jack Farnsworth. "If I had the helm that would be the first thing I 'd try to do."

"So should I if I had a harbor to run into," replied Ned. "But don't you see that if we ran upon a sandy beach when there was a sea on, we should soon come to a place where there would n't be water enough except as a wave came in? Then the boat would be lifted up by every wave, and suddenly dropped upon the hard sand, and I can tell you she would n't stand much of that. Did you never notice that nearly all shipwrecks occur along shore?"

"Yes, that 's true," replied Jack. "Ships that come to grief nearly always run on breakers or something; but I never thought of it before."

By this time Ned had secured at least a mile of offing but the sea grew every moment heavier. The

wind had risen to half a gale, and in spite of the close reefing of the sail the boat lay far over and Ned directed his companions to "trim ship" by sitting upon the gunwale.

Jack Farnsworth soon discovered that Ned was becoming anxious. He quietly said:

"You suspect danger, Ned?"

"Oh, no," replied Ned, "at least I think not."

"Yes you do. I see it in your face. Now I want to say at once that whatever the danger is, we can only increase it by losing our wits. The important thing is for you to keep perfectly cool, because you know more than we do about sailing. Then you can tell us what to do, if there 's any thing."

"Thank you," said Ned; "the fact is this: I think by the look of the horizon out there at sea, that we are likely to have a squall—that is, a sudden and very violent blow, added to the steadier wind that blows now. If we can run across this open space before it comes, we 'll be all right under the lee of that island over there, and if no squall comes we 're safe enough even here, because the boat is seaworthy. But a knock-over squall might capsize us. It 's coming, too—let go the sheet—cut it—any thing!"

be mashed into kindling wood. Every thing depends then upon where we strike. If it is far from shore the big waves will beat us to a jelly on the sand. Our only chance will be, as soon as the boat strikes, to catch the next wave, swimming with it toward shore, taking care, when it recedes, to light on our feet, and then run with all our might up the sand. If we can get inside the break of the surf before the next wave catches us we 're safe; but that 's the only chance. Every thing depends now on where we strike."

"Boots off," cried Jack; "we may have to swim."

Ned and Charley accepted the suggestion. All now anxiously scanned the shore, which seemed to be coming toward them at a tremendous speed. Suddenly Ned cried out:

"There 's a reef just ahead; when we strike try to cross it into the stiller water."

At that moment it seemed as if the sandy reef had suddenly shot up from below, striking the bottom of the boat as a trip-hammer might, and shivering it into fragments. What had really happened was this: the boat, driving forward on the crest of a wave, had been carried to a point immediately over the

sand ridge or reef, and there suddenly dropped by the receding of the wave. It had struck the sandy bottom with sufficient violence to crush its sides and bottom into a shapeless mass.

The boys were wellnigh stunned by the blow, but rallying quickly they ran forward in water only a few inches deep, and before the next incoming wave struck, they had crossed the narrow sand reef, and plunged into the deep, but comparatively still water that lay inside. The surf was broken, of course, upon the reef, and although the waves passed completely over it, their force was expended upon it, so that inside the barrier the boys found the water disturbed by nothing more than a swell. The distance to the shore was small, and they soon swam it, pulling themselves out on the sand, drenched, bareheaded, bootless, and weary beyond expression, not so much from exertion as from the strain through which their brains and nerves had passed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SITUATION.

THE first thing to be done was to rest. Utterly exhausted, the lads dragged themselves a few feet from the water and threw themselves down upon the sand, thinking of nothing and caring for nothing except to lie still. The squall had passed away as quickly as it had come, and although a stiff breeze was still blowing the afternoon sun beating down upon them warmed as well as dried them rapidly. Jack Farnsworth was the first to recover his wits.

"I say, fellows, this won't do," he said, raising himself to a sitting posture. "The day is waning and we 've got to get back to our camp before night."

Ned and Charley tried to rise. Ned accomplished the feat, but poor Charley found it impossible.

"Why, boys," he said, sinking back upon the sand, "I 'm all of a tremble; I don't know what 's the matter."

"Reaction," said Ned.

"What 's that?"

"Why, under all that excitement you kept your strength up by a tremendous effort, and now you 're paying the bill you owe your nerves."

"But I 'm sure I did n't tremble when we were in danger."

"No, because you would n't give way then. Your will was master. It ordered your nerves to furnish strength enough to keep still, and commanded your muscles to do what was necessary to get you safe ashore. They obeyed, and now your will is in their debt. It took more than was due, and your nerves and muscles have presented their bill. They are bullying your will in return for the bullying it gave them a little while ago. That 's the way my father explained it to me once when I trembled after a big scare. Only lie still awhile and you 'll come round. I was as weak as water five minutes ago, but I 'm getting my strength back again now."

"'As weak as water,'" said Jack Farnsworth medi-

tatively. "I used to think that a good comparison, but I 've altered my opinion. Water is the strongest thing I know."

"How is that?" asked Ned.

"Why, think how it picked the *Red Bird* up and flung her down on the sand like an angry giant—but with ten thousand times a giant's strength! And it picks great ships up in the same way and dashes them to pieces as I might do with an egg-shell or a China cup. Water is a giant, a demon of angry strength. I shall never think of it again as a thing of weakness. It means infinite power to me now."

"Poor old *Red Bird!*" said Ned; "there are her bones!"

There indeed lay what was left of the boat, where it had been drifted upon the sands by the swell. The tide, which had now begun to run out, had left the wreck "high and dry," and instinctively the boys went to look at it, Charley managing now to stagger forward slowly.

The wreck was a mass of timbers, ribs, and planking, looking like a boat that has been crushed flat under some enormous weight.

"What kept her from going all to bits?" asked Charley.

"Her copper bolts," answered Ned. "You see, she was particularly well built. There was n't a nail in her. From stem to stern all the fastenings were of copper, and copper is so tough that no ordinary wrenching will break it. It bends instead. But if we had simply run upon a beach in that sea, even copper bolts would n't have held the pieces together. Every wave would have lifted the wreck up and dashed it down on the sand until the planks and ribs were beaten into bits. As it is, the *Red Bird* struck only once. The next wave that came lifted her up and carried her clear across the reef into deep water before it dropped her, and so she received only that one blow. Once inside the reef, she drifted with the swell toward shore. She is an utter wreck though, and will never sail again."

There was a melancholy tone in the boy's voice as he said this, for he had sailed in this boat many and many a time, and had come to love her as if she had been a live thing.

"I 'll tell you what, boys," said Jack; "we 've got to start toward camp. It won't do to be caught

out to-night without supper or fire. Weary and soaked as we are, we shall be sick if we don't get something to eat and a fire to sleep by. Let 's get a vine and tie the wreck here so that it can't drift away with the next tide, and then be off at once. It 's nearly sunset."

When the " bones " of the boat were well secured, the boys set out; Charley having recovered his strength somewhat, they walked at a good pace along the shore, and reached camp just at dark. Building a large fire they soon had a hearty supper, with plenty of hot coffee, and when supper was done, they gladly put themselves to bed, aching a good deal from exhaustion, but really unharmed by their adventure.

Jack was the first to wake the next morning, but he did not get up immediately. He lay still, evidently thinking. After a while he arose quietly and, before dressing himself, made an examination of the stores of food on hand. Finally he roused his companions, and the three took a dip into the water.

" Now," said Jack, when all were seated at breakfast, " I want you boys to help me think a little, and you, Ned, to answer some questions."

"All right," said Ned, "I 'm thinking already."

"What are you thinking?" asked Charley.

"That these fish are n't as fresh as they might be; so I 'm going fishing before dinner."

"What in?" asked Jack.

"That 's a fact," said Ned and Charley in a breath. "We have n't a boat now."

"No," said Jack. "We have no boat, and that 's what I want to think about. How far is it to Bluffton, Ned?"

"About twelve miles."

"Is that the nearest point on the mainland?"

"Yes."

"Then we 've got to stay here till we can build a boat with such tools and materials as we have, if we can do it at all," said Jack.

"We can't do it," said Ned, with a look of consternation on his face; "we lack nearly every thing. We have n't even the plank!"

"Now don't let 's become demoralized," said Jack, who, ever since the accident of the day before, had been the leading spirit of the party. "We must keep our wits about us and lay our plans intelligently. But first of all we must look the facts in

the face. We are on a deserted island twelve miles from the mainland, without a boat. We must stay here until we can make arrangements of some kind for getting away, and that will be a good deal longer than we thought of staying when we came, for I don't suppose you meant it, Ned, when you told Maum Sally that we 'd be gone a month."

"No, I had n't a thought of staying more than a few days, or a week at most. We did n't bring enough provisions to last for more than a week."

"That is what I was coming to," said Jack. "I 've been looking over our stores this morning. We 've got to face the fact that we have n't nearly enough, and we must use what we have judiciously, taking great care to add other things as we can. Unluckily we lost our best friend when the gun went down in the wreck of the *Red Bird*. We can't hunt, but must depend upon other sources of supply. I suppose, Ned, there 's very little to be done fishing from the shore?"

"Nothing at all, I imagine," replied Ned; "but I may possibly catch a few mullets with the cast net. You see mullets run up into little bays to feed, and we sometimes go after them with the net, especially

at night. Then I can catch shrimps and some few crabs, and I suppose we shall find an oyster bank somewhere."

"Yes," said Jack, "I suppose we can manage somehow to get enough food; the trouble will be to get variety enough. Shrimps and crabs and oysters and fish are good food, but one does n't want to make them an exclusive diet. For health we must have variety."

"That is true," said Ned, "and our greatest trouble will be about bread. We have n't flour or rice or sweet potatoes enough to last more than a few days."

"No," said Jack, "and we have nothing to substitute for them. We must have every thing of the vegetable kind that we can get. Now what is there? I don't know, and can't think of a thing."

"There are several things," said Ned, "such as they are."

"Well, we 'll hunt for them. What are they?" asked Jack.

"There may possibly be wild sweet potatoes somewhere on the island, though that is doubtful. The soft parts of most roots are edible; there are

plenty of wild grapes in the woods, I suppose, and for a good substantial vegetable, we can eat an occasional dish of algæ."

"What 's that?"

"'What are they,' you should say; noun of the first declension,—alga, algæ, algæ, algam, etc.,—so algæ is the nominative plural."

"Oh, stop the declension—we have enough of that at school—and tell us what algæ are," said Charley.

"Sea-weeds. There are a great variety of them, and many kinds are eaten in different parts of the world. They are all harmless and more or less nutritious. We can try the different sorts that come ashore here and use the best that we can get."

"Shall we boil them?" asked Jack.

"I don't know. We 'll try that and see, at any rate."

"All right. Now we must manage each day to get as much food, of one kind and another, as we eat; it won't do to run short and trust to the future. We must save our flour and bacon for special occasions and as a reserve to fall back upon if at any time the supplies of other food fail us. We must keep our coffee, too, for use in case of sickness, or a bad

drenching in a cold rain. There may be times when we shall need it badly, and so we must do without it now. I think we shall get on pretty well for several weeks, and by that time I hope we shall be ready to leave the island."

"How?"

"Well, I 've a plan, but I 'm not sure about it yet. I thought of it yesterday, just after we came ashore. You two see what you can do toward getting some food, while I go off to inspect and lay my plans. When I come back I 'll tell you about them."

When Jack departed without telling his companions what he meant to do, Ned and Charley went up the shore with the cast net, and managed, within an hour or two, to secure a good supply of shrimps, one or two mullets, and a few oysters, though they discovered no oyster bed, as they had expected to do. They hoped to accomplish this by a longer journey along the shore, to be made on some other day. Having enough fish and shrimps for immediate use, they wished now to see what could be done toward securing a supply of vegetable food. They discovered no palmetto trees, but gave

their attention to the wild grapes, of which there were a good many in the woods.

It was well past midday when Ned and Charley, loaded with their spoils of sea and land, returned to the camp. There they found Jack, sitting on a log meditating.

"Boys," he said, "the important thing is not to let any thing discourage us. We must keep a stiff upper lip, no matter what happens."

"Yes, certainly," said Charley, "but what 's the special occasion of this lecture?"

"You are sure that no matter what happens, you 'll not give up, or grow scared, or get excited in any way?" asked Jack.

"Well, I must say—" began Charley.

"Hush, Charley," said Ned; "something 's wrong. Let 's hear what Jack has to say."

"What is it, Jack? Tell us quick."

"Well, only that we 're out of food."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that some animal or other has robbed us while we were all away from camp! Every thing 's gone, even to the box of salt and the coffee. We have n't a thing to eat except what you 've brought with you."

CHAPTER X.

PLANS AND DEVICES.

TO say that the boys were shocked and distressed by their new mishap, is very feebly to express their state of mind. There was consternation in the camp, from which Jack alone partially escaped. Jack had an uncommonly cool head. In ordinary circumstances there was nothing whatever to distinguish him from other boys. He rushed into difficulties as recklessly as anybody—as he did on the first day when he tried to use the cast net,—and joined in all sports and boyish enterprises with as little thought as boys usually show. But in real difficulty Jack Farnsworth was seen in a new light. He was calm, thoughtful, resolute, and full of resource. Ned had his first hint of this during that last voyage of the *Red Bird*, and as their difficulties multiplied both Ned and Charley learned to look

upon Jack as their leader. They turned to him now precisely as if he had been much older than themselves, and asked :

" What on earth are we to do, Jack ? "

" First of all," Jack replied, " we are to keep perfectly cool. Excitement will not only keep us from doing the best that we can, but it will weaken us and unfit us for work, even if it does n't bring on actual sickness, which it may do. Care killed a cat, you know. We positively must not get excited. After all, what occasion for uneasiness is there? We are pretty genuine Crusoes now, but we can stand that. We are literally wrecked upon a deserted island. We have lost our boat and our boots, our hats, our gun and our supply of provisions, and so we are not quite so well situated as Robinson Crusoe was ; but on the other hand we 're not going to stay here year after year as he did, and besides there are three of us to keep each other company."

" Well, company 's good, of course," said Charley Black, " but I 'm not so sure on the other points."

" How do you mean? " asked Ned.

" I 'm not so sure about our getting away sooner than Crusoe did. I don't see how we 're to get

away at all for that matter, but may be somebody will rescue us after twenty-eight years or so."

"Well, if they do," said Ned, "won't it be jolly fun to go back to school then, with long whiskers, and make old Bingham take us through the rest of Cæsar!"

Ned was naturally buoyant in spirits, and the spice of difficulty and danger in their situation had now begun to stimulate his gayety instead of depressing him. He was of too hopeful a nature to believe that their enforced stay upon the island was likely to be very greatly prolonged, although, if put to the proof, he had no more notion than Charley Black had, of a possible means of escape.

"Yes," answered Jack Farnsworth, "and after that length of time we 'll have a lot of things to learn besides Latin. We 'll have to study geography all over again to find out how many States there are in the Union, and whether France has swallowed Germany, or Russia has conquered England and moved her capital to London. Then, again, Ned, your science will be out of date, and you won't dare to mention oxygen even, for fear that somebody has found long ago that there is n't any such thing as

oxygen. We 'll be regular Rip Van Winkles. Who knows? Perhaps we shall find the United States turned into an empire, and steam-engines forgotten, and electricity, or something that we 've never heard of, doing the world's work. On the whole, I think if we stay here twenty-eight years, it will be better not to leave the island at all."

The banter between Ned and Jack was kept up in this way for some time, Ned talking for fun merely, while Jack talked for the purpose of overcoming poor Charley's evident depression of spirits. Finally Jack said:

"But we 're not going to be Rip Van Winkles or even Crusoes very long. We 'll have our lark out and then go back home in time for school—say about three weeks or a month hence, keeping Ned's appointment with Maum Sally."

"But how on earth are we to get back?" asked Charley.

"In a boat, to be sure; we can't walk twelve miles on the water," answered Jack, "particularly now that we 're barefooted. We 'd get our feet wet, without a doubt."

"Where are we to get a boat?"

"Well, that is what I 've been thinking about," said Jack, "and I think I 've worked the problem out."

"All right, what 's the answer?" asked Ned.

"Why, that we must rebuild the *Red Bird*."

"How can we? She is mashed into kindling wood," said Charley.

"No, not quite," answered Jack. "She is badly mashed, certainly, but it 's simply mashing I have been to look at her. She lies there as flat as if a steamship had sat down upon her, but I have carefully examined every stick of her timber, and while the *Red Bird* is no more a boat than a lumber pile is a house, still she is a pretty good pile of lumber. Comparatively few of her planks are badly split or broken, while her ribs seem to be broken only in one or two places each. After examining her very carefully I am satisfied that her timbers will furnish us enough material for a new boat. We must build a smaller boat out of her bones—particularly a shorter boat. She was twenty-four feet long, and by shortening her in the middle—that is, by leaving out the middle ribs—we shall have enough planking to make a new boat. Patching up the ribs will be the most difficult

job, but I think we can manage it. Most of the planks are broken in two, but we can join the ends on ribs, and, if we are patient, we can make a pretty good boat. Patience is the one thing needful, especially for inexperienced workmen with a scanty supply of tools. We must make good joints if we have to work a week over the joining of two boards."

"What are we to do for nails?" asked Ned; "we have n't more than a pound or two here."

"We have n't a single nail," said Jack; "the wild animal, whatever it was, that robbed us, seems to have had a very miscellaneous appetite. It not only took our flour and bacon, our salt and our coffee and sugar; it seems to have had an appetite for nails and blankets too. At any rate, it stole them all, but luckily it did n't find the tools, because you had the hatchet with you, and I had the axe."

"The mischief!" exclaimed Ned.

"Yes, it 's mischief enough for that matter, but it might have been worse. I suppose some rascals landed here while we were away and robbed us. Of course it could n't have been an animal, although that was my first thought when I found the provi-

sions gone. Whoever it was he is n't likely to come again, but we must watch our camp now, and particularly we must take care of our tools."

"But you have n't answered my question about nails," said Ned.

"We must make them of the *Red Bird's* copper bolts," answered Jack; "and if we run short we can use wooden pins; but I think there is an abundance of the copper. Luckily the anchor came ashore entangled in the wreck, and that will serve us for an anvil. We can hammer the bolts into nails, using the hatchet for a hammer. It will be slow work, because while the hatchet is in use making nails we can't use it in building the boat."

"I 'll tell you what," said Charley, whose spirits began now to revive; "we 'll work hard of nights making nails, and have them ready for the next day."

"Yes, and we shan't want any nails for a day or two, while we 're making preparations to begin, and so we can get a good supply in advance."

"That 's so," said Ned; "but do you know we 're wasting precious time? It is nearly sundown, and we have a lot to do before we go to bed. We have n't thought of dinner yet, and we can't now till

after our work is done. We must bring the wreck around here to-night. The fellow that robbed our camp was probably some negro squatter from some of the islands around us, and if he got sight of the wreck on his way back, he is sure to come over and carry away all that is valuable of the *Red Bird's* bones to-night. We must get ahead of him, and bring the wreck around to the camp the first thing we do."

This suggestion commended itself to Ned's companions, and the boys set off at once, taking the axe and hatchet with them.

When they arrived at the wreck the tide was very nearly full, so that there was not much difficulty in getting the remains of the *Red Bird* afloat. It was a mere raft of plank and timbers, of course, which must be dragged through the water along the shore by means of the anchor rope and some wild vines cut in the woods. For a time the still incoming tide was in their favor, and they travelled the first half mile pretty rapidly. When the tide turned, however, the labor became very severe, and it was ten o'clock at night when the wreck of the *Red Bird* was safely landed at the camp. The boys

were exhausted with work, and very hungry. Ned stirred up the fire and put on a kettle of salt water, into which, as soon as it boiled, he poured a quart or two of shrimps.

"We 'll make a shrimp dinner to-night," he said, "and that will leave us the mullets and wild grapes for breakfast."

"All right," answered Jack; "I 'm hungry enough not to care for variety to-night; speed is the word just now."

Dinner over, the boys had still to collect a large mass of the long gray moss to serve instead of the stolen blankets, so that it was quite midnight when they finally got to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME OF NED'S SCIENCE.

"HOW shall we cook our fish, Ned?" asked Charley, the next morning. He had already thrown wood upon the embers when Ned and Jack came out of the hut.

"We must roast them," said Ned, "now that we have no bacon to fry them with. We can broil sometimes and roast sometimes, for variety. Without butter broiled fish are rather dry. I 'll be cook this morning, and show you how to roast small fish."

With that he went to the beach and walked along the water's edge till he found a bunch of clean, wet sea-weed. Returning to the fire, he carefully wrapped the mullets in this, and placed them in the hot ashes, covering them with live coals to a depth of several inches. Half an hour later he took them

carefully out of their wrappings, and placed them on the log that did duty for a table.

The fish were beautifully done, and looked as tempting as possible, but, upon tasting them, a look of consternation came over Jack's countenance.

"I never thought of that," said Jack, "but we are out of salt! What shall we do? We can't live altogether on shrimps and oysters; and fish without salt is a difficult dish to eat."

"We must make some salt," said Ned.

"Out of the sea-water?" asked Charley.

"Yes. It is slow work, and without clarifying materials we 'll get a rather black product, but it will be salt for all that."

"What will make it black?" asked Jack.

"Impurities. The sea-water is filled with various things—common salt, mostly, of course, but there are Glauber's salts, Epsom salts, magnesia, and many other things, including salts of silver and iron. In making salt out of sea-water, these impurities must be got rid of, or the salt will be of a dirty brownish color. We can't clarify it, but we can use it very well for all our purposes. We 'll have to put up with a poor breakfast, but we 'll do better by night.

I 'll start our salt-works immediately after breakfast, and then I 'll leave Charley in charge of the business, because I have an idea of my own that I want to carry out. We must devote ourselves to-day exclusively to the business of getting food, I suppose."

"Yes, that is the first thing to be done. We are at the starvation point and must get something to eat before we begin on the boat. What is the plan that you speak of?"

"I shan't tell you, because it may come to nothing, though I 'm hopeful."

"All right, I hope it will turn out well. Meantime, I 'll take the cast net and get some shrimps and possibly some fish, and then if I had any thing to bait with, I would set some rabbit traps or something of that sort. But I have n't, and so I can't. Charley can carry on the salt-works while you do whatever it is you mean to do."

The salt-works consisted of nothing more than the kettle. Filling this with clear sea-water, Ned set it to boil, saying:

"Now, Charley, as it boils down add more water, and toward night we can stop adding water and let the salt settle. It will begin to settle before that

time, and when it does you can dip the wet salt up from the bottom and spread it out on a plank to dry."

"All right. I 'll make a dipper out of a tin cup by fastening a stick to it for a handle. But what makes the salt settle?"

"Why, don't you see? You can only dissolve a certain amount of salt in a certain amount of water; if you put more in it sinks to the bottom, being heavier than water, and stays there. When a liquid has as much of any thing dissolved in it as it can hold, it is said to be saturated; we call it a saturated solution. Now when you boil sea-water it evaporates, and the quantity of water steadily decreases. After awhile so much of the water is evaporated that we have a saturated solution, and then if you evaporate half a pint more of it the salt that a half pint of water can hold in solution must settle to the bottom. It is a curious fact that water which is saturated with one substance, so that it can not hold any more of it, is still capable of dissolving other substances and holding them in solution. Sometimes, in making salt, men take advantage of that fact."

"How?" asked Jack, who had become interested in Ned's explanation.

"Why, by washing out the impurities of the salt with salt water. Having a quantity of impure salt they put it into a funnel-shaped vessel with a small hole in the bottom; then they take clear water and pure salt and make a saturated solution of that; this water cannot dissolve any more salt, but it is still capable of dissolving the other substances which constitute impurities; so it is poured into the vessel that contains the impure salt, and as it passes through it dissolves and carries off the impurities, but does n't dissolve any of the salt."

"Why can't we purify our salt in that way?" asked Charley.

"Because we have no pure salt with which to make the solution."

"That 's so, but I did n't think of it. I wish I knew as much as you do about such things."

"I don't know much," answered Ned. "I have always been curious to know facts of the sort, and my father has encouraged me to find them out. I ask questions and read what books I can on such subjects; but I learn most by looking and thinking for myself. Still I know very little about scientific matters; really I do. But we 're wasting time; I

must be off and so must you, Jack. Keep the salt kettle boiling, Charley, and don't forget to add water to it from time to time. When you pour cold water in you can skim the scum off, and in that way you 'll get rid of a good deal of impurity."

With that the boys separated. Jack went down along the shore, with the cast-net in his hand; while Ned struck off into the woods with the coffee-pot, which, now that the boys had no coffee, was no longer in use at camp.

Jack returned about noon, bringing back a fine lot of shrimps, half a dozen fish, a few crabs, and some oysters, together with the news that he had discovered a large oyster bank which could be reached by wading at low tide.

Charley greeted him with a smiling face on which there was a look of triumph.

"Look here, Jack," he said, going to a plank upon which there were two or three little white heaps; "Ned is out in his science this time; I 've got beautifully white salt as you see, and not the dark, impure stuff he said I would get; but that is n't all; instead of settling to the bottom of the kettle, it rises to the top to be skimmed off."

"Yes, I could have told you that," said Ned, who had arrived unobserved. "It 's a way that it has. Taste your salt, Charley."

Charley did so, looked puzzled, and then turned to Ned.

"What is it, old fellow?" he asked.

"Why, beautifully white salt to be sure," answered Ned; "is n't that what you said it was?"

"Yes, I said that," answered Charley, "but now I know better. It is tasteless."

"Magnesia usually is," said Ned.

"Is that magnesia?"

"Yes, in the main. It is mixed a little with other things perhaps, but it is mostly magnesia. That is why I told you to skim it off. We don't want it in the salt."

"But I have n't any salt," said Charley, "I 've filled the kettle up every fifteen minutes but no salt has settled yet."

"Your solution is n't saturated yet," said Ned. "This water contains only about two per cent of salt, or possibly in its impure state three per cent. To make one kettleful of salt we must boil away from thirty to fifty kettlefuls of water. The kettle holds

two gallons, and so, in order to get a pint of salt we must boil away two or three kettlefuls of water. You have filled it up enough for to-day; now keep it boiling and we 'll get a pint or two of salt, before night, and meantime we can pour a little of the boiled-down water on our fish for dinner, for I 'm hungry."

"By the way, Ned," said Jack, "what luck have you had?"

"Good. I 've brought back a coffee-pot half full, and have made arrangements for more to-morrow."

"Well, I like puzzles and riddles and things of that sort," said Jack, "but I hate to wait for 'our next month's number' for the answer. What is it you 've got in the coffee-pot?"

"Bread," answered Ned, "or a substitute for it. I 've been gathering the seeds of grasses and weeds."

"Seeds of grasses!" exclaimed Charley; "why, who ever heard of anybody eating grass seeds?"

"You 've turned sceptic, Charley, since your faith in your beautiful white salt received such a shock," said Ned; "but still I think some grass seeds are

occasionally eaten by men,—wheat, for example, and rice and corn."

"That 's so," said Charley, abashed; "only I never thought of wheat and rice, etc., as grasses. But are wild grass seeds good to eat?"

"Yes, of course. All ordinary grass seeds are composed of substantially the same materials, and they are all nutritious. I have gathered about a quart, meaning to mash them up and make a sort of bread out of them; but there is n't time for that now, so I mean to boil them for dinner. The important thing is to have some kind of grain food to eat, and in that way we 'll get it somewhat as if we had rice."

"That 's a capital idea, Ned," said Jack. "Is there plenty of seed to be had?"

"Yes, now that I know where it is, though it is very slow work gathering such seed. I have only to gather it and winnow it. I can winnow a little faster next time, because I shall take something along to winnow upon, if it is only a clean handkerchief. I 've thought of something else too."

"What is that?" asked Charley.

"Acorns and other nuts. They are rather green

yet, but they are nutritious, and we can beat them into a palatable bread. Hogs grow fat on them, and there is no reason why they should not prove nutritious to us. I 'm going to find some edible roots, too, if I can."

"What a splendid provider you are, Ned," said Charley, "particularly as we have the oysters, shrimps, etc., for a foundation to build upon."

"Well," replied Ned, "do you know I have been thinking that we should not starve even if we had n't the water for a source of supply?"

"How is that?"

"In casting about for a variety of things to eat, I have naturally tried to think of every thing that could support life, and have been surprised to find how many things there are that can be eaten in extreme cases. If we were in real danger of starving we could eat snails and earthworms for meat——"

"Ugh!" exclaimed Charley.

"Well, snails and earthworms are both regarded as delicacies by many people in France. They actually have snail farms, where the creatures are fattened for market."

"As a business?"

"Yes, as a business. There is a demand for snails at high prices, because people who can pay well for them are fond of them. Then we could kill a few snakes and lizards here, I suppose. In fact, I killed a snake this afternoon, and if I had n't been afraid of disgusting you fellows, I should have brought it home as a valuable contribution to our larder, for snakes are uncommonly good eating."

"Did you ever eat one?" asked Jack.

"Yes; or at least a part of one. There is no reason why snakes should not be eaten, except a groundless prejudice. Their flesh is both good and wholesome."

"Hurrah for our scientist!" said Jack. "I begin to see now, that our supplies are a good deal greater than I supposed. For my part, I mean to have a snake breakfast some of these mornings just for variety's sake. Why, we shall begin to live like princes presently."

"Will you really lay aside prejudice, Jack, and eat a well-cooked snake?" asked Ned.

"Certainly I will," said Jack.

"And you, Charley?"

"I see no objection, now that I think of it," said Charley.

"Very well; then I 'll go for my snake. It is n't a hundred yards away, and it will furnish us meat, which is much more strengthening than an exclusive diet of fish and such things can be."

The snake—a large one—was brought to camp, skinned, dressed, and broiled to a crisp brown on a bed of coals. When done it was appetizing both in appearance and in odor, and the boys, who, naturally, were very hungry after their scanty breakfast and diligent work, ate it with keen relish, eating with it some boiled grass seeds. The only complaint made concerning the grass seeds was that there was not half enough of them.

The salt kettle had been filled more frequently than Ned had supposed, and the yield for the day was more nearly a quart than a pint.

"Now we are beginning to know how to live," said Jack. "We have only to get a good start and keep a fair supply of food ahead. But we must lay in a good stock of seeds to-morrow. I 'll go with you, Ned, and we 'll both work at that, while Charley minds camp and makes salt."

"To-morrow will be Sunday," said Charley.

"No it won't; this is Friday," said Jack.

"Let 's see," said Ned. "We got to Bluffton on Monday evening, did n't we? Well, the next day we went fishing; that was Tuesday. The next day we came over here; that was Wednesday. The next day, Thursday, the wreck of the *Red Bird* occurred. Friday we spent in getting food and bringing the wreck around here to the camp. That was yesterday, and so to-day is Saturday. Lucky that Charley thought of it. We must n't work to-morrow, and so we must catch a lot of shrimps and fish with the net to-night."

The boys worked with the net until nearly midnight, and slept late the next morning. They observed Sunday as a day of rest, and rest was a thing that they greatly needed just at that time. It was agreed that on Monday morning Jack and Ned should go after grass seed, while Charley should mind camp, make salt, and use the net.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK'S DISCOVERY.

THE harvest of seeds from which Ned and Jack were to draw their supplies, was found in an abandoned field, half a mile from the camp. Here various wild grasses and weeds grew in rank profusion, and had already ripened in the sun. Some yielded seeds so small and so few in number that it was a waste of time to thresh them; others were richer in larger seeds; while many of the weeds, particularly, gave a profuse supply of seeds almost as large as grains of wheat, but these were mostly worthless.

Ned was the recognized "scientist" of the party, and upon him devolved the task and responsibility of determining what kinds of seed to gather and what to leave. He was familiar with the ordinary plants of the country, and knew which of them were poisonous. It remained only to determine whether

or not a seed, known to be harmless, was of any value as food, and Ned's method of doing this was very simple. He bit the seed to discover what he could about its flavor and general character in that way; then he split a seed and inspected it. If it seemed to consist principally of starch, gluten, and fruity matter, he accepted that kind of seed; if it appeared dry, hard, and black upon the inside, he deemed it unworthy.

Passing the point at which he had gathered seeds on the day before, Ned selected a good spot for a threshing-floor, and said:

"Now, Jack, I 'll clear a space here and get ready for threshing; we 'll get on faster in that way. You go off out there and gather grasses. Pretty soon I 'll join you, and when we get a supply, we 'll thresh awhile."

With this the boys separated. Ned worked diligently at his clearing, and Jack brought in armfuls of grass.

After awhile Ned finished his task and began to wonder what had became of Jack, who had been absent for a considerable time. He called, but Jack did not answer. Thinking nothing of the matter he

went on with the work of gathering grass. Still Jack did not return, and after an hour had passed Ned became positively uneasy. He again called aloud, and Jack answered, but his voice came from a considerable distance.

Continuing his work Ned waited, and after awhile he heard Jack coming through a briar thicket, muttering complaints of some sort with a good deal of vigor.

"What 's the matter, old fellow?" he asked.

"Matter enough," answered Jack, from the depths of the briar patch in which he was completely hidden; "I 'm torn to pieces by the briars, and by the time I get to you I shan't have enough skin left on me to serve for patches."

"Nonsense!" said Ned; "shield your face with your arm and break right through. Your clothes are thick and stout."

"Yes," answered Jack, "so they are; but I have n't got them on."

Ned leaped to his feet, for he had been kneeling to arrange the grass for threshing. He remembered how rapidly he and his companions had been reduced in their possessions, until now they were

boatless, bootless, hatless, and without regular supplies of food; and so when Jack declared that he had no clothes on, Ned at once imagined that some new calamity had befallen him.

"What!" he exclaimed. "No clothes! Why, we 'll be naked savages before another week is out."

"I did n't say I had no clothes," answered Jack, still picking his way carefully through the briars. "I only said I had no clothes on, or at least none to speak of."

"Well, then, you must be out of your head," answered Ned. "Why don't you put them on?"

"Because I can't till we get to camp," and with that Jack made a final leap into the open space and stood before his astonished companion. He presented a queer appearance. For clothing he had on only his drawers and a thin undershirt. These were torn and stained with blood from many scratches. Jack's face, too, was a good deal scratched, but there was a triumphant look in his eyes which made Ned forget to look at the briar wounds. Jack's trowsers, tied at bottom and stuffed full of some heavy material, sat astride his

neck, looking for all the world like the lower half of a very fat boy. His shirt, also well filled, was carried in one hand, while his coat, made into a bundle and likewise filled, was held in the other.

"What in the name of common-sense have you been stuffing your clothes with, Jack?" asked Ned in astonishment.

"Grass seed," answered Jack, throwing his burden on the ground.

"Not much," said Ned; "why it would take both of us a month to gather and thresh out that quantity."

"I thought you scientific people always recognized one fact as worth more than any number of 'must be's'; here I have the facts—a trowsers-full, a shirt-full, and a coat-full,—and yet you argue about what must be and what can't be."

"I admit the trowsers and the shirt and the coat, and I see that they are full," said Ned; "I only doubt the character of their contents. I don't believe you could have gathered such a quantity of grass seed within so short a time."

"Not of the kind that grows here, but mine are not of that kind."

"Let me look at them," said Ned.

"Not till we get to camp; I can't open the bags without spilling a lot."

"Well, tell me about it then."

"Well, I was gathering grasses over there by those tall trees, when I happened to look away toward the south. There I saw, about half a mile away, what looked like a patch of ripe wheat or oats. There were two or three acres of it down in a sort of marsh, so I went over there to see what it was. I found the little marsh covered thickly with a tall grass somewhat like oats, and all had gone to seed. The seeds are about the size of grains of wheat, but rather longer, and each grain, when threshed out, is covered with a brown husk that clings closely to the body of the grain. The seeds themselves are starchy, glutinous, and, if I am not mistaken, excellent food. It was too far to call you, so I made up my mind I would thresh some of the grass and bring away what I could of the result. I filled my shirt, coat, and trowsers, and I should have used my drawers in the same way if I could have carried any more. As it is, I 've a big load."

"I should say so," answered Ned, "and a mighty good load, too, if I 'm not mistaken."

"Why, what do you suppose it is?"

"Grass seed," answered Ned, "of the kind that we call *rice*."

"But how did it come there?" asked Jack. "Does rice grow wild?"

"Yes, sometimes. When a rice field is allowed to stand too long before cutting, the grain drops out of the heads, of course, and the next year a fair volunteer crop comes up. In this case, I suppose, the explanation is simple. When the island was abandoned during the war, there was probably a growing crop of rice in that little swamp. If so, it went to seed, and not being harvested, the seed fell to the ground, coming up again the next year only to repeat the process year after year. That 's my explanation at any rate, and the only one I can think of. But come! let 's go to camp. It is n't worth while now to fool away time over this grass. Now that you have found a rice field, we 'll eat rice instead, and some day soon we 'll go there and bring back enough to last us till we leave the island."

Upon their arrival at camp the contents of Jack's clothes proved to be, as Ned had conjectured, rough rice; that is to say, rice from which the outer husks

have been removed, leaving only the closely clinging inner husk on the grain. The amount secured was sufficient to last the boys for a considerable time, and in the absence of bread, it was a thing of no little moment to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ANXIOUS NIGHT.

DINNER was cooked and eaten as soon as possible after the return of Ned and Jack to camp, because all three of the boys were eager to make the long-deferred beginning upon the new boat.

"The *Red Bird* was wrecked last Thursday," said Charley, "and now it is Monday, and yet we have n't even begun to get ready to prepare to commence to build."

"Yes we have, Charley," said Jack. "We have worked diligently at the most important part of the task. We have made first-rate arrangements for food, and that is a good beginning. But we 'll actually begin on the boat itself to-day. By the way, Ned, you 're to be the master-builder."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Ned; "you

were bragging the other day about your mechanical skill, and I 'm very modest in that direction. I 'm actually a clumsy hand with tools."

"No, I did n't brag," said Jack; "I only stated facts. I believe I am a better workman with tools than either of you fellows, and for that reason I 'm willing to take the most difficult jobs on myself, but you must be the superintendent."

"I don't see why," said Ned.

"Because, even if you are clumsy with tools, you know more about a boat in a minute than Charley and I do in a year, and it 's a good rule to put each fellow at the thing he can do best."

"All right," said Charley; "I 'm the best hand you ever saw at sitting on a log and watching you fellows work, so I 'll take that for my share."

"No, you won't," said Ned. "If I 'm to superintend this job I 'll find something better than that for you to do. But I say, Jack, it 's absurd for me to try to tell you how to do things that you can do ten times as well as I."

"I don't want you to tell me how to do, but what to do; then we 'll all do it. I 'll take the most difficult parts, and besides that I 'll give you and

Charley some hints about how to do your share, perhaps."

"All right," said Ned, "I 'll be superintendent if you wish."

"Very well," said Jack. "Now plan the boat, determine the dimensions, and tell us how to begin."

"Well, let me see," said Ned. "The *Red Bird* was twenty-four feet long in the keel—twenty-five feet over all,—and five feet wide amidships. We must allow liberally for waste in trying to use the old materials, so we 'll take off six feet of length, giving the new boat a keel of eighteen feet, a total length of nineteen feet, and let the beam width take care of itself."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, we shorten amidships only; that is to say we omit the six or eight ribs that were in the middle of the old boat, and bring the next ribs forward and aft to the middle. Whatever width they give will be the width of the boat amidships. In that way we shall preserve the old proportions, while changing the old dimensions. The new boat will be, in shape, precisely what the *Red Bird* would have been if we had cut out six feet of her length amid-

ships, and had then brought the two ends together."

"Yes, I see," said Charley. "What is the first thing to be done?"

"To lay a keel," said Ned. "The old keel is broken, so we must have a new one. Besides, that was double, for a centre-board, and we 'll have to build without a centre-board."

"What are the dimensions of the keel?" asked Jack.

"Eighteen feet long, as nearly as we can guess, and about three inches by six or seven."

"To be set on edge?"

"Yes, and to project below the bottom. That will give steadiness to the boat."

"What is the best timber for the keel?" asked Jack.

"White oak, if we had it, but we have n't. The long-leaf yellow pine is very nearly as good, and for our purposes it is really better, because we can work it more easily. There 's a fine, small, straight tree trunk just beyond the camp that will suit us precisely. It has been lying for several years apparently, and is well seasoned. We have only to cut it off

the right length, split off slabs till we get a rude square, and then hew it down to the right dimensions with the axe and hatchet. That will occupy us for two days at least, so let 's get to work."

The event proved that Ned had underestimated the length of time necessary for this work. The hard, flinty yellow pine, seasoned as it was, was very difficult to work. The axe and hatchet were not very sharp at the outset, and before night both were distressingly dull. The next day, what edges they had were worn away, and it was difficult to cut with them at all. Charley declared that he could do nearly as well with his teeth, but he did not try that experiment. There was no grindstone in the camp, and none to be had, of course, and so the weary boys had to make the best of a bad matter and work on as they could with the dull tools.

On Thursday the keel was not yet quite done, and the rice began to show the effects of the boys' appetites.

"I say, fellows," said Charley, "one of us must go for a fresh supply of rice."

"Yes," said Ned, "it is ripening now, and will all

fall if we don't secure a good supply. You go, Charley, won't you?"

"Yes. I 'm worth less at carpenter's work than either of you, so I 'll go. Pull off your trowsers, both of you."

"Why, what 's—" began Ned.

"Yes, I know," interrupted Charley, "I ought to take a bag, or a sheet, or, still better, the spring wagon; but seeing that we have n't any wagon, or bag, or sheet, or any thing else to carry rice in, except trowsers, I 'm going to use trowsers; and remembering the tattered condition of Jack's skin after his trowserless stroll through the briars, I 'm not going to use my own trowsers for a bag. So off with your pantaloons, young men, and be quick about it, for I 'm going to make two trips to-day and bring in rice for the whole season."

Laughing, the boys obeyed, and Charley left them at work in their shirts and drawers. He got back to camp at dinner-time, fully loaded. After dinner he made his second trip, saying that he would return about sunset.

Sunset came at its appointed time, but Charley was not so punctual. It grew dark, and still Charley

did not appear. Ned and Jack began to grow uneasy. They went out into the woods in rear of their camp and called at the top of their voices, but received no answer.

"I 'll tell you what, Ned," said Jack; "we must build a beacon fire. Charley has stayed late to fill his trowser-bags, and has lost his way trying to get back."

It was no sooner said than done. Pitch pine was piled on the fire, and a blaze made that might have been seen for many miles. The boys shouted themselves hoarse too, but got no answer.

After an hour of waiting, Ned said:

"Jack, I 'm going over to the rice patch to look for Charley. Something serious must have happened. You stay here and keep up a big fire. If I need you I 'll call at the top of my voice, and you will hear me I think."

"But, Ned, it 's an awful undertaking to go from here to the rice field on such a night. It 's as black as pitch, and you are barefooted and almost naked; let me go."

"I know all that," said Ned, "but it would be cowardly to abandon Charley, and for my life I can't

see that you are any better equipped for the journey than I am. You 're barefooted too, and as nearly naked as I am."

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Jack, "but I don't mind for myself."

"You stay here, you great big-hearted, generous fellow!" was all that Ned said in reply, as he started away.

Both Jack and Ned knew that the journey thus undertaken would be attended by no little danger as well as sore discomfort and suffering. The deadly moccasin and rattlesnake lurk in the grass and weeds of that coast country, and the unshod boy was in peril of their fangs at every step. He was too brave a boy, however, to shrink from danger when a real duty was to be done, and so he set forth manfully. Taking a stick he struck the ground frequently, as a precaution against the danger of stepping upon any snake that might be in his path, and more than once he heard the venomous creatures hiss angrily before scurrying away.

He pressed forward too eagerly to pay due attention to briars and brushwood, and so before he reached the rice swamp his scanty clothing was

nearly torn from his body and his skin was badly lacerated. His coat protected his shoulders and arms, of course, but his legs, hands, and face suffered not a little.

Meantime Jack kept up the beacon fire, suffering scarcely less with anxiety and impatience than Ned suffered from physical hurts. Poor Jack had the hard task of waiting in terror and uncertainty. He imagined all manner of evils that might have happened to Charley; then he became anxious about Ned. He shuddered to think of the dangers through which his companion must be passing. The necessity of inactivity was intolerable; Jack could not sit or stand still. He felt that he should go mad if he did not keep in motion. He paced up and down by the fire, as a caged tiger does. Finally, morbid fancies took possession of him. He imagined that he heard Ned groan in the bushes on his left. Then he seemed to hear a cry of agony from Charley in the woods on his right. Investigation revealed nothing, and Jack returned to his waiting in an agony of suspense.

It was after midnight when Ned returned, torn, bleeding, worn out with exertion, and very lame

from a wound in his foot. He had trodden upon some sharp thing, a thorn or sharp spike of wood, which had thrust itself deep into the flesh of his heel, and the wound was now badly inflamed.

"Thank heaven, you are safe at any rate!" exclaimed Jack fervently. "Did you find out any thing about poor Charley?"

"Nothing," answered Ned, returning Jack's warm hand-clasp. "I went to the rice field and found the place where he had been threshing, but no other trace of him. He must have finished threshing, however, and started homeward, as he left no threshed rice there. I could not find a trail in the dark, of course, and I can't imagine what has become of Charley. I called him repeatedly, and went all around the marsh, but it was of no use. Besides, if he were anywhere in that region he would know the way home, for I could see not only the light from this fire but the blaze itself."

"Well, you stay here now and let me go," said Jack, preparing to set out.

"What 's the use?" asked Ned. "I tell you I have done all that can be done until daylight. If you go you 'll only run the risk of laming yourself, and

then there 'll be nobody fit to take up the search when morning comes to make it hopeful."

This was so obviously a sensible view of the situation, that Jack was forced, though reluctantly, to remain where he was.

Hour after hour the two boys waited and watched, keeping up the beacon fire, and occasionally investigating sounds which they heard or thought that they heard in the woods and thickets around them. Naturally they talked very little. There was nothing to talk of except Charley's disappearance, and there was little to be said about that.

It began to rain, slowly at first, and in torrents toward morning, but neither boy thought of going into the hut for shelter. Indeed, neither boy seemed conscious of the fact that it was raining at all. They were aware only of the horrible suspense in which they were passing the hours of a night which seemed almost endless.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE GRAY OF THE MORNING.

AS the first flush of dawn appeared Ned said: "Jack, we must n't lose our heads. You know what you said after the wreck. You and I have to look after Charley to-day, and we may have need of all our wits and all our strength; so, for his sake, if not for our own, we must force a full breakfast down our throats. It will steady as well as strengthen us. I don't want any thing to eat, and I suppose you don't, but we must eat for all that. We have n't had a mouthful since noon yesterday, and we 'll be fit for no exertion if we go on in this way."

"That is true," answered Jack; "we must eat breakfast."

"Very well; then let 's be about it, so that we may have it over by the time that it is fairly light, and then we 'll lose no time in setting out."

"You can't leave camp," said Jack; "your foot is awfully swollen and your leg too."

"Yes, I know," answered Ned, "but I am going anyhow. We must find Charley, and maybe both of us will be needed when we do."

While this discussion was going on the breakfast preparations were advancing, and it was not long before the two disconsolate fellows began the difficult task of forcing food down their unwilling throats.

"What is our best plan of operations, Jack?" asked Ned.

"I scarcely know. Perhaps we 'd best go round the island, one one way and the other the other, shouting and looking. Then, if either finds Charley and needs assistance the other will of course be there soon afterward."

"Hardly," said Ned. "The island is pretty large, and I suppose it is a good many miles around it. Would n't it be better to take a direct course?"

"How?"

"Why, by going first to the rice swamp. There we shall almost certainly be able to find and follow Charley's trail."

"Of course." answered Jack. "What an idiot I was not to thing of that first! The fact is, I believe last night's anxiety, particularly while you were away, was too much for me. I lost my head a little, I think, and have n't quite found it again."

"Listen! What 's that?" exclaimed Ned, rising to look. As he did so, the bushes near the shore on the left of the camp parted, and——

"Bless me! it 's Charley!" shouted both boys in a breath.

"Did you think I had run away with your trowsers?" asked the cause of all their anxieties, throwing down the two pairs of pantaloons stuffed full of wet rice.

"Gracious! Charley, where have you been?"

"We 've had an awful night!" exclaimed Ned.

"Do I look as though I had had a particularly pleasant one?" responded Charley. "Do my dress and general appearance indicate that I dined last evening in the mansions of the great and slept upon a bed of down?"

"Well, no," said Ned, unable as yet to share Charley's cheerfulness of mood; "but really, Char-

ley, we have suffered a good deal. You ought to have come back to camp."

"Now, look here, fellows," said Charley, more seriously than he had yet spoken, "if you think I have n't known by instinct how much you would suffer because of my unexplained absence, you do me great injustice. My situation through the night has been none of the pleasantest, but the worst part of it has been what I have suffered thinking of your anxiety. Pray, don't imagine that I 'm totally destitute of feeling."

There was a hurt tone in Charley's voice as he said this, to which Ned responded at once.

"Forgive me, Charley," he said, holding out his hand, which the other took. "I did not mean to reproach you wrongfully. I know your warm heart and generous soul."

"Yes," added Jack, "and nothing in the world could have made us so happy as your safe return. But tell us what has happened. Where have you been?"

"Not a word until food is set before me," said Charley, relapsing into his playful mood again. "I am famished."

"All right," said Ned; "we cooked enough to

take with us, and we did n't eat much, so your breakfast is ready. In fact I begin to be hungry myself, now that you 've got back in safety."

"So do I," said Jack; "let 's begin over again, and all breakfast together."

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLEY BLACK'S ADVENTURES.

"NOW, then," said Jack, when breakfast was fairly begun, "tell us all about it, Charley."

"Well," replied Charley, "you know we 're Robinson Crusoes."

"Oh! stop your nonsense and tell your story," said Ned, who was wildly impatient to hear of Charley's adventures.

"That 's just what I am telling," answered Charley, "As I said, we 're Robinson Crusoes and I 've seen the savages."

"What *do* you mean?" asked Jack.

"Why, Friday, of course, but that 's a mistake too. His real name must be Thursday, and he is n't tame either. Really I begin to believe Robinson Crusoe fibbed."

"Have you gone crazy, Charley, or what is the

matter?" asked Ned, beginning now to be really alarmed lest his comrade's experience, whatever it had been, had unsettled his mind.

"I never was more rational in my life," replied the boy, with a smile; "but you won't let me tell my story in my own way. Listen now and don't interrupt. You remember how frightened Crusoe was when he discovered the footprint in the sand?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And how he afterward found the savage who made it, and how disturbed he was to learn that he was not really monarch of all he surveyed?"

"Yes; well?"

"Well, I 've been through a similar experience, only more so. This island is not uninhabited as we supposed. There are savages on it, and they are not tame savages either, like Crusoe's man Friday, but decidedly savage savages. My man Thursday is, at any rate. You see I call him Thursday because I first saw him yesterday, and that was Thursday. That 's the way Crusoe hit upon a name for his savage, you remember?"

"Yes, but tell us about it," said Jack.

"Listen, then. You know I went out to the rice

patch and brought in one load. Then I went for another, and after I filled the trowsers, I concluded that I 'd walk down toward the shore and return by that route. As I went along by the edge of the rice patch about sunset, I saw a footprint, just as Crusoe did, but I did n't study it long, for presently its owner appeared. He was a big savage, and black as night, and not in the least peaceful. Indeed he seemed very angry with me for some reason, for he came running toward me, jabbering in his strange language and setting his dog on me. I ran as fast as I could toward that piece of woods over beyond the rice swamp—more than a mile away from here, you remember, and on the other side of the island. I had a good start, but it was a close shave. As I approached the woods I picked out the tree I meant to climb, and when I got to it I went up faster than I ever climbed before, for the big ugly dog was close behind me. He jumped up after me, but I drew up my leg and he missed the foot he wanted.

"I was tired, and was awfully out of breath; but I thought I had only to wait until the big negro should come up—I could see him coming. Then I would argue the matter with him and get him to be

reasonable and call off his dog. You see I took him for a negro, and did n't suspect that he was a savage. I soon found out my mistake, however, for when he came up and began swearing at me—I 'm sure it was swearing, though, of course, I could n't understand a word of it—I found that he talked Savage and did n't understand a word of English.

" I was in a fix. My tree was about a mile and a half from camp, even if you measure the distance in a bee line, so there was no use in shouting for assistance. There stood the raving savage jabbering at me, and threatening me with his club; and, worse still, there stood his dog at the foot of the tree waiting for a dish of Charley Black for supper. I reasoned with the savage, but he did n't understand me any more than I understood him. The more I talked the madder he got. Then I remembered having read somewhere something about the 'eloquent language' of gestures, signs, and all that, which all human beings are supposed to understand, so I tried that awhile. I shrugged my shoulders, waved my hands about, motioned to him to call off his dog and go home, and did other things of the sort; but it was n't of the least use. That savage persisted in

THE ELOQUENT LANGUAGE OF GESTURE.

misunderstanding me, and his dog got madder and madder. Finally, just to see if the benighted idiot could understand sign language at all, I put my thumb to my nose and twiddled my fingers at him, at the same time shaking my other fist. He understood that, and took further offence at it. In his rage he tried to climb my tree to get at me, but he was a rather clumsy climber and made little headway. When he got within reach I struck him a sudden blow with your trowsers, Jack, which, being filled chock full of rice, made a pretty good club. He dropped like a shot squirrel, and his dog, thinking that I had fallen, made a rush for him. For a moment I flattered myself that now I should get away while the savage and the dog were explaining matters to each other; but in that I was disappointed. The dog found out his mistake instantly, and the savage got up, madder than ever. It was getting dark by that time, but the savage thought he would have a game of bat and ball with me while the light lasted, anyhow, so he took good aim and threw his club at me. I caught it a sharp blow with your trowsers, and knocked it back to him. He threw again with the same result. The third throw went wide of the

mark, and so I missed, but it did n't matter, for there was no catching out to be done in that game—I suppose the savage don't understand the rules of bat and ball.

"Finally, after he had thrown a good many times, his club lodged in the tree, and I climbed up and got it. It was a good stout club—there it lies by the fire—and I thought I might have use for it, so I did n't throw it back at the savage's head, as I at first intended, but kept it for future use.

"Night came on and the savage seated himself to watch me. He kept very quiet, and made his dog stop growling and snarling. At first I did n't understand this. I began to think that he was going to offer me terms, but he did n't. At last I saw what he was at. He was waiting for me to fall asleep and drop down!

"There was nothing for it but to keep awake, and as it was very cold I had to climb about a little to keep myself comfortable, and that kept me me from falling asleep.

"The worst of it all was that I could see the big fire you fellows made, and knew what anxiety you were suffering. I sat there in the dark, hour after

hour, worrying and wondering if the daylight had forgotten to come, and it was an awful time. The rain came on at last, and I was quickly wet through. The savage could n't sit long on the ground when the floods came, so he got up and moved uneasily about, but he would n't go away. His persistence was 'worthy of a better cause.' After a little while he began to collect bushes to make himself a shelter, I suppose, or to sit on, or stand on—I don't know what. It was slow work in the dark, and he had to go away some little distance to get what he wanted. While he was away on one of these little trips an idea occurred to me, but as he was already on his way back I could not act upon it at once, so I sat still and waited. He went away again, fifty or seventy-five yards into the woods—I could tell by the noise he made breaking bushes. Then I tried my plan. Climbing down to the lowest limb of the tree, I could see the dog, dark as it was, standing ready to receive me. Grasping the club in my right hand, I dropped a pair of trowsers full of rice. The dog, mistaking the bundle for me, was on it in an instant, and the next instant I was on him. I dropped on him purposely, and luckily my left foot

struck his neck. Of course I could not hold him long in that way, but still it gave me a moment's advantage, and during that moment I managed to deal the brute two or three blows over the head which, I think, must have crushed his skull. At any rate he grew limber under me and never uttered a sound. Hurriedly picking up the trowsers and swinging them around my neck, I was about to run when Mr. Savage came running out of the woods. I still had the club in my hand, and quick as lightning I struck him with it and took to my heels. How badly I hurt him I don't know, but not so badly as could have been wished, for he paused only for a few seconds. Then he gave chase. I ran with all my might, with him just behind. Presently I struck something with my foot—a grape-vine I suppose—and came very near to falling, but managed to save myself. Mr. Savage Thursday was not so lucky. He struck the vine fairly and came down like a big tree trunk. For a second he uttered no sound. Then I could hear him swearing in Savage, but by this time I was fifty yards ahead of him, and by the time that he decided whether to resume the chase or not I was too far away to inquire

what his decision was. It was so dark that if he had followed he could n't have found me, so I slackened my pace, and not long afterward dropped into a walk, listening occasionally to hear if he was coming. Hearing nothing, I plodded on. I did n't know just where I was, so I thought my best plan was to keep straight on until I struck the shore. I passed a group of huts about a mile from my tree, and I suppose the savages live there, as I heard dogs barking, but I did n't stop to inquire. Finally I came to the beach, and, believing that I was more than half way round the island, I turned to the right and followed the shore till I got to camp. There, that 's the whole story of the strange adventures of Master Charles Black, of his exploration of Bee Island, his encounter with the savage, and his fortunate escape and return to his companions. How did you hurt your foot, Ned?"

Ned, who had risen and was limping about the fire, explained his mishap, and in their turn he and Jack told Charley of the events of the night as seen from their point of view. Their story was less exciting than Charley's, but he was deeply interested in it.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON GUARD.

"WHO in the world can Charley's 'savages' be, Ned?" asked Jack, when the story was finished.

"Negro squatters," answered Ned; "I did n't think there were any on Bee Island."

"What do you mean by negro squatters?"

"Why, negroes who, instead of hiring themselves out or renting land, have simply squatted on the island, cultivating little patches, and living by hunting and fishing. There are a good many on plantations that have n't been cultivated since the war. You see, when the war ended there were many men who had large bodies of land—some of them owning half a dozen big plantations—but with very little capital. They have not been able, for want of money, to resume the cultivation of all their aban-

doned plantations, so there are many large tracts still lying idle and unoccupied, and some of the negroes, not caring to hire as hands, or to rent land, have squatted here and there. They are generally the worst of the negroes; men without thrift, and almost untouched by civilization. They prefer a wild life, and live by fishing, hunting, and stealing from choice."

"But, I say," said Charley, "my savage was n't a tame negro at all. He could n't speak English I tell you."

"No more can many others of the old sea-island and rice-field negroes. They talk a jargon which only themselves and the old-time overseers ever understood. The fact is that many of them really were savages before the war,—untamed Guinea savages. They or their parents were brought here from Africa, and they lived all their lives here on these coast plantations, rarely seeing a white person except their overseers, and learning scarcely any thing of civilized life. They were not at all like the negroes up in Aiken, and all over the South for that matter. They were simply savages who had learned to work under an overseer, and when the war ended the

worst of them relapsed into the ways of savage life instead of trying to improve themselves as the negroes everywhere else did. They had n't learned enough to want to be civilized."

"But what did that fellow get after Charley for?"

"Because we 've been robbing their rice field without knowing it."

"I did n't think of that. I thought the rice was wild—self-seeded."

"Probably it is," answered Ned, "but they regard it as theirs for all that, just as they think this island is theirs, although it belongs to my uncle."

"Now I know who stole our provisions," said Charley. "But I say, boys, what 's to be done? Suppose the savages should attack us here?"

"They may do that," answered Ned, "though I don't think it likely. They want us away, perhaps, but they chiefly want us to let them and their rice alone, and now that we know that it 's theirs by some sort of right, we 'll let it alone and get on with what we have on hand. The main thing now is to build our boat. We must get on as fast as we can with that."

"That 's so," said Jack. "That must be the first thing thought of, but still it seems to me we should do something for our own defence. You see, Ned, if they should attack us, we are helpless. We have n't a thing to defend ourselves with, now that the gun is gone, and it is n't right to trust too much to those people's good-nature."

"Well, what can we do?"

"A good many things; I don't know exactly what will be best as yet, but we must think it out while we work on the boat. Then we can compare notes and do whatever is best. We 'll work on the boat until dinner-time, and then give the afternoon to our defences. Perhaps we can make so good a beginning that we need n't spend more than an hour or two each day on that work after to-day."

"All right," said Ned; "now let 's get to work on the boat."

With a will the three boys set to work. The stem- and stern-posts of the new boat were securely fastened to the keel, and the difficult task of setting up the ribs was begun. These ribs were so broken that it required not a little planning and contriving to make them answer the purpose; but Jack was

very ingenious, and under his direction Ned and Charley managed to do some very clever splicing and bracing, while Jack himself dealt with the most difficult problems.

By mid-day about half the ribs were in their place.

"We can begin to see the shape of our new boat," said Ned, "and I 'm not sure she is n't going to be prettier than the old *Red Bird*."

"By the way," said Jack, "what are we to name her?"

"The Phœnix," suggested Charley; then he added: "No that won't do, because it is n't a case of rising from ashes. The *Red Bird* was n't burned."

"No," said Ned, "that would be very absurd. Suppose we call her Sea-Gull, because she came to us—in her timbers at least—from the sea."

"Better call her 'axe, hatchet, and hunting-knife,'" said Jack, "because we are making her with those tools. But if we must be poetical and suggestive, why not call her Aphrodite? She, like that fabled goddess, is sprung from the foam of the sea."

"*Aphrodite* it is," shouted Jack's companions, and Charley added:

"You 're the most classical and poetic youth of the party, Jack, if you do pretend to sneer at us for our sentimental fancy for an appropriate name."

"Very well," replied Jack, "you 're welcome to think so; but just now I want my dinner worse than any thing else, and that is n't a mere sentiment I assure you."

Dinner over, the preparations for defence were begun.

"What plan have you thought of, Jack?" Charley asked.

"Let me hear from you and Ned first," answered Jack.

"Well, I 've thought of earthworks," said Charley; "they say they are the best fortifications."

"Against cannon, yes," said Ned; "but it 's only because cannon can't batter them down as they can masonry. Our problem is a very different one, because our savages have n't any cannon. What we have got to do is not to make fortifications that can't be battered down by artillery, but to fence ourselves in in some way so that the negro squatters can't get at us."

"Well, what 's your idea for that?" asked Charley.

"A stockade."

"Details?" queried Jack.

"My notion is," answered Ned, "to set a line of stockade around the camp, running it out into the water on each side, making a big 'C' of it. If we make it ten feet high and slope it outward, it will puzzle the squatters to get over it, and from the inside we can beat them off."

"But how shall we make the stockade?" asked Jack.

"Why, by digging a trench first, and setting timbers in it, sloping them at the proper angle, and filling in with earth."

"But could n't a strong man pull a timber down by jumping up and hanging to it with his hands?" asked Charley.

"Perhaps so, if each timber stood alone," said Ned, "but we 'll set a row of them in the ditch, and then roll a log in behind them before filling up. Then we 'll set another row and roll in another log, and so on. Then, in order to pull down a post it will be necessary to lift the whole of the log that is behind it, together with all the earth that lies on top of the log, and that is more than any half dozen men can do."

"That 's an excellent idea," said Jack, after thinking awhile, "but the job is too big to be completed to-day. We 'd better follow my plan first, and make the stockade hereafter."

"What 's your plan?"

"To build a sort of wall of timber around the camp. It is n't half so good as a stockade, because of course it is easily climbed over; but it is better than nothing, and will do for one night."

"But I don't see," said Charley, "that we can build a timber wall half so quickly as we can make the stockade. To do it we have got to cut enough logs to make a pile all around the camp, and that will take ten times as many logs as it will to make the stockade."

"That is true," said Jack, "and, besides, small timbers, five or six inches in diameter, will do as well for the stockade as big logs, and in the present state of our axe that is a consideration not to be despised. I surrender. Ned's plan is by odds the best one. Let 's get to work at it, and if we don't finish it to-day, we 'll patch up the deficiency in some way. Luckily we have digging tools."

The soil of the coast and islands of South Carolina

is a light vegetable mould, mixed with sand, and below it there is sand only. There are no rocks, no stones, no pebbles even, and no stiff clay; and all this was greatly in the boys' favor. The trench grew very rapidly as they worked. Jack and Ned dug, while Charley, who was more expert with the axe than either of his companions, cut down small trees and trimmed them into shape for the stockade, making each about fourteen feet long, so that when set in the ditch it would project about ten feet above ground.

The digging of the ditch was the smallest part of the task. Its length, in order to enclose the hut, the well, and the boat, had to be about one hundred and fifty feet, so that a great many sticks of timber were necessary.

"We must set them about six inches apart," said Jack, "so as to use as few as we can at first. If necessary, we can fill in the gaps afterward; but a man can't get through a six-inch crack, and by setting them in that way each post, with its half of the two cracks, will occupy about a foot of space."

But to cut a hundred and fifty pieces of timber with a dull axe was no small job, and when night

came on the boys had only twenty-five of them set up in their places, while as many more were ready for use. This was discouraging, and in their weariness Ned and Charley felt very much disheartened indeed. Jack alone kept his spirits up.

"It 's very good work so far as it goes," he said, looking at the line of timbers all leaning outward from the camp, "and when we get it done it will puzzle all the squatters in South Carolina to take our fort."

"Yes, if we ever do get it done," said Charley, despondently.

"Now, Charley," said Jack, "none of that. We 've been in a tighter place than this, and you especially ought not to be downhearted. You 're ever so much better off than you were this time last night, when that darkey had you treed; and you 're better off now than Ned is, with his game foot."

"Poor fellow," said Charley, looking at Ned as he limped into the hut with difficulty.

"The fact is," continued Jack, "we 're tired out, and so things look blue to us, but they 'll look better in the morning. You see we got no sleep last night, besides wearing ourselves out with anxiety and ex-

citement, and we have worked like convicts all day. We 'll feel better and brighter after we get some sleep, and things that look gloomy and discouraging now will look bright and hopeful enough to-morrow morning."

"That 's true," said Ned, coming out of the hut again, "and it would be much better for us if we could quit work right now, and sleep for ten hours without waking, but we can't."

"Why not?" asked Charley, who was utterly worn out.

"Because we 've some more work to do that must be done before we sleep," answered Ned. "What we have done for defence is of no good at all as it stands. We must have a barrier around the camp to-night."

"How shall we make one?" asked Jack.

"With brush. We have plenty of it already cut in the shape of the tree tops we 've trimmed off in getting our stockade poles."

"Brush won't make a very good defence," muttered Charley.

"No, but it will be much better than no defence at all," replied Ned. "It is n't easy to climb over a

well-packed brush pile, particularly if the brush is so laid that all the branches point outward, and that 's the way we 'll lay it. It won't take long to make a wall of that kind, and we can remove it little by little, as we set the poles hereafter."

This plan commended itself to Jack, and Charley submitted. Poor fellow, he was too weary to take any active interest even in plans for defence. The brushwood was brought and carefully placed in position. It was not sufficient to make a wall all the way around, but only a small gap was left near the water.

"Shall we cut more brush to-night, Jack?" asked Ned.

"No, I think we need n't. When we go to setting poles to-morrow, the brush we remove will do to close the gap with, and for one night we can watch so small an opening. We need rest and sleep now more than any thing else. You and Charley lie down. I 'm the freshest one of the party, I think, and so I 'll stand guard for a good while before calling either of you."

"Stand guard?" asked Ned; "what for?"

"Why, it won't do at all for all three to sleep at

once. We might be attacked while asleep. If there were no danger of that we need n't have thought of a stockade at all."

Sleepy and tired as Ned and Charley were, they recognized the necessity for this watchfulness. It was very hard for the three weary fellows to take their turns at standing guard that night, but they did their duty. Jack took a long turn first, and Ned followed him, so that Charley got a good sleep of several hours, and was much refreshed before his period of watching began.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW DANGER.

THE night brought its alarms with it. Every noise in the woods round about startled the alert sentinel, and there always are noises at night, not only in the woods but in houses also, as we all find out, when for any reason we are awake and on the alert. It seemed to each of the boys during this night, that there never were so many sounds which could not be explained : crackling noises, like those which are produced by the breaking of dry sticks under foot; sounds of footsteps, and of hard breathing; a thousand different sounds, in short, each of which seemed for the time being surely to indicate the stealthy approach of some foe.

Morning came at last, however, and no ill had befallen the camp. It was voted at breakfast that this day should be devoted exclusively to fortification,

security being deemed of more pressing importance than escape from the island.

By steady persistence the work was carried forward until the line of tall, leaning pickets was more than half-way round the camp. This at least reduced the space to be watched through the night to less than half its former length, and as the night passed quietly with no sign of an enemy about, it was unanimously resolved, the next morning, that Sunday should be kept as a day of rest, the opinion being that the completion of the stockade could not now be called a work of necessity.

During Sunday night, however, the boys had reason to modify this opinion somewhat. About two o'clock Ned, who was on guard at the time, armed with a big club, awoke his companions, saying, in a whisper:

"Get up, quick! There 's somebody about."

The two sleepers sprang to their feet quickly, and, seizing their clubs, joined Ned outside the hut.

By way of precaution the boys had cut a considerable number of short, thick, and very heavy clubs, which could be made to serve a good purpose

as missiles. Thrown with violence from the hand they were likely to be of much greater service than stones or brickbats would have been, if such things had been at hand. Armed with these clubs the boys peered and listened. For a while they heard nothing. Then a low growl came from the bushes, and the sound of a sharp blow followed it immediately. Evidently one of the squatters was sneaking around the camp, and when his dog growled he struck it to secure silence.

The boys waited a long time but heard nothing more. Finally, in a low whisper, Ned said :

" There can't be more than one of them here."

" No, I suppose not," answered Jack, " but let 's be quiet and see what he wants."

All became still again, and as the boys from their hiding-place could not be seen by any one in the bushes, the prowler had every reason to suppose that they were asleep. After perhaps an hour's waiting, Jack whispered :

" I see him ; he is crawling on his stomach to the fire. H—sh ! let 's see what he wants."

The man could be seen only in dim outline until he reached the fire, and, taking a smouldering

brand, blew it to quicken its burning. The light thus created revealed his face, and the sight was not a pleasant one to the boys. They saw in their visitor as ugly and forbidding a specimen of untamed humanity as one often meets. He was a negro of the small, ugly, tough-looking variety, seen nowhere in this country except on the South Carolina and Georgia coast. About five feet two inches high, he had a small, flat head, large, muscular arms and body, short legs, and no clothing except a sort of sack with head- and arm-holes in it, worn as a shirt. His brow was so low and retreating, that his eyes seemed to project beyond it. His nose was flattened out as if it had tried to spread itself evenly all over his face. His thick lips were too short to cover his big teeth, and it is hardly necessary to add that he looked far less like a rational human being than like some wild animal.

When he had satisfied himself that his brand was burning, he crept a few paces further, and his purpose was revealed. He meant to set fire to the pile of plank that the boat was to be built of.

"Quick now," said Jack, "give him a volley of clubs and then charge!"

"GIVE HIM A VOLLEY AND THEN CHARGE!"

[t was no sooner said than done. Standing at s than twenty feet distance, the boys threw one b each at the intruder, and then, snatching other ıbs, one in each hand, rushed upon him. Rising, knocked Jack down, but was brought to his own ees by Charley's club. At that moment the ın's dog, a surly-looking brute, seized Charley, d it required the combined efforts of all three ›ys—for Jack was up again in an instant—to beat e creature off. While they were engaged in this, e dog's master, finding himself outnumbered and ermatched, took to his heels and the camp was ear, for the dog quickly followed, howling with ain.

"Are you much hurt, Charley?" was the first uestion asked when the enemy's retreat left the oys free to think of themselves.

"I 'm pretty severely bitten," was the reply, "but ıckily it 's in the fleshy part of my thigh, and the lesh is n't torn. One of you must have struck very ıuickly, or I should n't have got off so easily. See," ıe continued, when the fire had been stirred into a ›laze, "the brute buried his teeth, but let go again without shaking me."

"Yes, I saw him jump at you, and tried to hit him before he got hold," said Ned. "I must have struck him just as he seized you—half a second too late to save you entirely, but I hit him fairly on the head."

"And he had to let go of me to howl," said Charley, who, in spite of his pain, was in good spirits after the exciting encounter. "By the way, are you hurt, Jack?"

"I 've an earache," said Jack, turning his head and showing an inflamed and swollen ear; "but I 'm glad that fellow did n't hit me fairly in the face, as he meant to do. It would have settled the question of photographs for me for all time, I think. Why, if I had caught that blow on the face my nose would have been distributed over the rest of my countenance as evenly as his is."

"You look solemn, Ned," said Charley; "are you hurt too?"

"No, but I 'm thinking."

"Well, out with your thought then. What is it?"

"Only that we 're fairly in for it now."

"In for what?"

"War."

"War?"

"Yes. You don't suppose we 're going to have peace with the squatters now, do you? They 'll attack us in force as sure as sunrise and sunset."

"Well, it 's my opinion that one of them, at least, has got as much of us as he wants," said Charley.

"Very likely," answered Ned; "but now he 'll want to give us something, by way of returning the compliment. He 'll bring all his friends with him next time."

"But I don't see what we 've done that they should interfere with us."

"Oh! don't you? Well, that 's because you don't look at the matter with their eyes. You see, when we first came here they did n't object. They took a fancy to our coffee and flour and bacon, and the rest of it, and helped themselves, but they did n't in the least object to us or our presence. Having got all we had for them to steal, they let us alone. But when they found that we were getting rice out of what they called their field, it put a new face on the matter, and they objected. You baffled the one that got after you, and he hurt himself trying to catch

you. That was another offence on our part, and so this fellow that was here to-night determined to get even with us by burning us out. He has been pretty badly whipped, and he is n't likely to forget it. He 'll bring all his friends here and we must take care of ourselves, for we shan't get any coddling, I can assure you, if we fall into their hands."

"You are right, Ned," said Jack; "and now we must really take care of ourselves. It 's nearly morning, and we may as well get breakfast at once and get an early start. We must be ready to receive those fellows when they come."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CAMP-FACTORY.

BREAKFAST was finished before daylight that morning, and when it was over the three companions resumed work upon their fortification. Ned stopped long enough to catch some shrimps for dinner, but with that exception there was no break at all in the morning's work, and dinner-time found the boys tired as well as hungry. The afternoon was spent quite as industriously, and when night came the fort, though still incomplete, was well advanced toward security.

"Now," said Ned, when supper-time came, "we have had rather too much of shrimps, I think, and of oysters too. I 'm going out with the net to-night to catch some fish for to-morrow. What do you two propose to do?"

"I 'm going to make some more clubs," said

Charley. "We 've something like a fort now, and the next thing is to provide an abundance of ammunition."

"By the way," said Ned "why can't we make some better arms?"

"Of what sort?" asked Jack.

"Well, bows and arrows, for example. We can make arrow-heads out of some of our copper bolts, and they are weapons not to be despised—what are you smiling at, Charley?"

"Oh! nothing; I was only wondering what good bows and arrows would do without bowstrings."

Ned's countenance fell; then he joined in the smile of his companions, and admitted that his little plan had been very imperfectly worked out in his head.

"I might make some blow-guns out of the canes," he said, "but they 're not worth making. I have killed birds with them, but I 've tried them thoroughly and they won't shoot hard enough to drive an arrow-head half an inch into a pine plank; so they would be worthless for our purposes."

"Yes," said Jack, "I think we may make up our minds that we 've got to get on with no better

weapons than our clubs for general use, with the axe, hatchet, and digging tools to fall back upon as a last resort. To use such things means to kill, and of course we don't want to do that."

"No, of course not. We only want to protect ourselves and make these squatters let us alone. We don't want to do the poor creatures any unnecessary harm."

Saying this, Ned took the net and went away in search of fish. When he had gone Jack said:

"Charley, let 's build a platform to fight from."

"I don't quite understand you," said Charley.

"Well, you see the stockade is ten feet high, and slopes outward, and so it won't be easy for anybody to scale it; but it is n't impossible, particularly if one has time to put up a pole or two to climb on. My notion is that we must be prepared to interfere with anybody who tries to do that. We must build a sort of platform all around inside the stockade, about six feet from the ground; it need n't be any thing more than a row of poles laid against the stockade and supported by some forked stakes. We can then stand up on these poles and look over the top of the stockade. If anybody tries to climb up, we can

beat him back from there, while if we were on the ground inside here, we should be nearly helpless. It won't take you and me more than half an hour or so to rig the thing up."

"That 's a good idea," replied Charley ; " and we need the platform more to-night than we shall at any time hereafter."

" Why? "

" Because if those fellows mean to attack us they will do so at once. If we escape to-night we 're not likely to be attacked at all."

" I don't know about that," answered Jack. " On the contrary, I think they 'll let us alone to-night, because they 'll expect us to be on the lookout for them. They have no special fancy for getting their heads broken, and when they come they will try to take us by surprise. At least that 's my notion."

" Then you think they are likely to attack us later this week or next? "

" Yes, at any time except to-night. They will wait for us to make up our minds that they are n't coming at all."

" Well—that *fabula docet* that we must n't make up our minds in that direction at all."

"Exactly. We must be as alert two weeks hence as we are now—if we 're here so long. But come, let 's get to work."

Cutting some forked stakes, which did not need to be driven far into the ground, because they were to be leant toward the sloping stockade, the boys placed them in position, and laid poles from one to another until the line stretched all the way around the enclosure. It was easy to walk upon these poles all the way around, and when standing upon them the boys' shoulders were above the top of the stockade.

Near the water, on each side, an entrance to the stockade had been made, and a movable piece of timber, with a notch in it and a brace behind, served to close each of these gates; and when thus closed and fastened from the inside, the gates were as secure as any other part of the fortress.

Jack's prediction that the enemy would not appear on Monday night was verified. The whole of that week, indeed, was passed in complete quietude.

Having made their fortress reasonably secure, the boys resumed work upon the boat on Monday and continued it throughout the week; but they gave

only one half of each day to that task, devoting the other half to the work of strengthening their fort. The posts, as we know, were originally set six inches apart for the sake of hurrying the work, but this was not intended to be a permanent arrangement. As fast as they could the boys filled up the spaces thus left, and by Saturday night the fort was complete, so that its inmates felt entirely confident of their ability to beat off any attack the negro squatters might choose to make.

Meantime the boat approached completion, though there was, perhaps, a week's work, or a little less, still to be done upon her.

"We must caulk her seams," said Ned on Sunday, as the boys sat chatting round their fire, "with moss instead of oakum, and then we 'll coat her all over with pitch."

"By the way," answered Charley, "we 've got to make the pitch. Do you know how, Ned?"

"Not very well," replied Ned, "but I think we can make out."

"I know," said Jack; "I 've seen tar made in the North Carolina tar country, and pitch is only boiled tar."

"Very well, then, you shall superintend that job," said Ned; "you know that was our bargain, to make each fellow manage the things he understood best."

"You 'd better make a lot of salt, then, right away, beginning to-morrow morning."

"Why? You don't use salt in making pitch, do you?"

"No; but I shall want the big kettle to boil the tar in, and it won't be fit for use as a salt kettle after that."

"Then we must cook up all our rice too," said Charley.

"No, we need n't," said Ned; "it would spoil if we did, and we can cook it, as we need it, in the coffee-pot."

Early the next morning these preparations were begun. Charley got his salt factory at work, Ned worked at the boat, and Jack made preparations for tar-burning. He began by digging a pit about four feet square and two feet deep. Then—at a distance of about a foot—he dug another pit about three feet square and four feet deep. He packed the wall of earth that separated the two pits as firmly as he could, and then, cutting a long joint of cane for a

tar pipe, he passed it through this wall, from a point exactly at the bottom of the shallow pit. He inclined it downward a little, so that the tar might easily run though it and fall into the deeper pit.

Having finished this part of his work, Jack went into the woods near the camp and prepared a large quantity of "fat" pine for burning. Piling this in the shallow pit, and heaping it two or three feet above the level ground, he took the shovel and covered the pile with earth to a depth of a foot or more, leaving a single opening through which he could set fire to the mass. His object was, by smothering the flames in this way, to make the fat, resinous pine burn slowly, creating a roasting heat under the earth, and thus, as it were, melting the tar out of the pine. If he had not covered the wood with earth, it would have blazed up and burned to smoke, resin and all, making no tar at all.

When all was ready the pile was set on fire, and as soon as it had caught well, Jack covered the single opening with earth, and the mound smoked like a volcano. Pretty soon a little stream of smoking-hot tar began trickling through the cane-tube into the deep pit.

Night had now come on, and the smoke from the tar-kiln, catching the light from the camp-fire, glowed with a peculiar red color, and gave a picturesque air of strangeness to the camp.

"You 've started a young volcano, Jack," said Charley, as he looked at the smoking mound.

"Yes. An improvement on Crusoe," said Ned; "he had no volcano on his island. But what a quantity of smoke the thing does make. It looks as if more material came out of the mound in that way than you put into it in the shape of wood."

"Yes, and so a gallon of water will fill a big room if you make it into steam."

"What is smoke anyhow?" asked Charley.

"It is composed of several things," answered Ned, "but chiefly of carbon. Indeed, all that you can see in smoke is carbon."

"Then why does n't it burn?"

"It would if it were kept in the fire long enough; but the light vapors that rise from the fire carry the particles of carbon with them, and so they get out of the fire before they are burned. The smoke is simply so much wasted fuel, and many plans have

been made to save it in factories where the cost of fuel is great."

"There 's a big waste in making tar, then," said Charley.

"Not half so much as you think," said Jack. "They don't waste the smoke up in the North Carolina tar country."

"How do they burn it?"

"They don't burn it, but they catch it and sell it."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, they have wire screens stretched over the tar-kilns, and as the smoke strikes them the fine particles of carbon stick to them. I have seen masses of them hanging down many inches from the screens, and very pretty they are too."

"But what do they do with the stuff?" asked Charley.

"Sell it. It is called lamp-black, and it brings a pretty good price."

"That is close economy, is n't it?"

"Yes, but it is frequently by just such 'margins' as that that manufacturing becomes profitable. It is a very poor and desolate-looking country up there in the tar-making districts, and I remember hearing

a man say once, as we passed through it: 'This is the country where they waste nothing; they bark the trees to get resin; they distil the resin and make turpentine; what 's left is rosin; when the trees die they burn them to make tar, catch the smoke for lamp-black, and there are n't any ashes.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

A NIGHT OF ADVENTURE.

THE tar flowed freely during Monday night and Tuesday, and by the time that Tuesday's labors were finished, there was enough in the deep vat to make all the pitch that was required. The salt-making was finished too, and the big kettle was ready for use the next day in boiling the tar to make pitch of it.

On Tuesday evening Ned determined to go fishing, as he did nearly every night when the tide was at a proper stage. He had learned now the spots most frequented by the mullets, and usually succeeded in bringing back a good supply of them to camp. The boys had grown very tired indeed of their restricted diet. For three weeks now they had not tasted meat of any kind—for they never repeated their snake supper,—but had lived on fish,

shrimps, oysters, and a few crabs; and being without bacon or any other kind of fat with which to fry their fish, they could not make an appearance of variety by changing the way of cooking them. They had to eat every thing boiled, or roasted, or broiled on the coals, and in the absence of butter and other seasoning for broiled fish, the roast, baked, broiled, and boiled all tasted alike. They had lost their relish for such food as they could get, but having nothing else they were forced to eat it.

On this Tuesday night Ned remained away from camp longer than usual, and at about eleven o'clock Charley went to bed, Jack mounting guard. About an hour later Jack waked Charley, saying:

"I 'm uneasy about Ned, Charley. It must be midnight and he has n't come in yet."

Charley sprang up quickly, and the two looked and listened. Finally it was decided that as Charley was less able to run than Jack—because of the dog-bite, which had not yet entirely healed,—he should remain on guard while Jack should go out in search of Ned.

Ten minutes later Jack came back, running as quietly as he could, and hastily pushed through the

eastern gate. Fastening this, he exclaimed in an excited way:

"The squatters are all around us, and I 'm afraid they 've captured Ned."

"Why? Where are they? Tell me all about it, quick."

"I don't know much about it myself," answered Jack. "I only know that as I walked down along the shore in the direction that Ned took, I almost stumbled over one of the squatters. I retreated, of course, and by keeping in the bushes and looking and listening, I made out that there were at least half a dozen of them about. As I could see nothing, and hear nothing of Ned, I 'm afraid they 've caught him. You see they came right along the shore where he was wading about and fishing, and if they had n't caught him, of course he would have run in to give us the alarm. Poor fellow! I wonder if they 'll kill him?"

"I 'm afraid of worse than that," said Charley, solemnly

"What?" asked Jack.

"I 'm afraid they 'll flog him. That would be horrible! for my part I 'd a good deal rather be killed, and I 'm sure Ned would."

Yes, of course," said Jack. Then, after a pause, dded:

'll tell you what, Charley, we must n't let that en."

How 'll we help it?"

Well, they won't try that till after they 've made attack on the fort. They 'll simply tie Ned, keep him till they 're through with us, and so have time to make a diversion in his favor. ve got to give them battle outside the fort. If in drive them off we may find Ned. When he what 's up he 'll let us know where he is ly enough."

'es, if he has n't been carried too far away al-'," said Charley. "At any rate, we 'll try. re were the darkies when you saw them?"

About two hundred yards away, in the woods the shore."

All right. Now let 's remember that we 've got ck together, and that our object is to do not as but as little fighting as necessary, and to get he enemy if we can, and go on down the shore arch of Ned. We must n't stop to do any unsary fighting."

"No, we 'll try first to creep past without any fighting at all," said Jack.

Arming themselves with their best clubs the two boys crept out of the eastern gate and made their way as secretly as they could through the woods. They saw two of the squatters, but managed to slip past them without discovery, and when they had got well beyond them they made their way rapidly along the beach, calling Ned at the top of their voices and listening for his answer. At last they heard a shout in reply, but it seemed a long way off, and singularly enough it was in the direction of the camp. Turning around, they were filled with horror and amazement at what they saw. A great red blaze was shooting up from the camp.

"They 're burning us out!" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes, and they must have Ned there with them. His shout came from that direction."

"Come, let 's run with all our might. We may get there in time to save Ned at any rate!"

They ran like deer-hounds and were quickly at the burning camp.

They encountered three of the negroes just out-

ıe camp, but coming upon them by surprise
ere able to run past and to enter the gate be-
eir enemies could lay hold of them. Once in-
ey fastened the gate log. As they did so and
they discovered that they had caught one of
ssailants—a negro boy not older than them-
—inside. This lad showed fight, but with two
him he was quickly secured, and tied with
ıt's anchor rope.

ı Jack and Charley had time to see the extent
mischief done. The stockade itself was un-
, and thus far the boat also was safe, but the
ar was afire, and the bush hut in which the
ept had either caught from the blazing tar or
:t on fire by the negro boy. It was obviously
: to save the hut, even if the boys had been
work upon it, as they were not, for the dan-
the boat, which lay very near the fire and
eady scorching, was too great to be trifled
Jack managed to rescue the salt from the hut,
n he and Charley began wetting moss and
.t over the boat.

s won't do, Jack," said Charley; "those ras-
:side will make their way over the stockade

if they are n't watched. Can't you keep the moss wet now?"

"Yes, I 'll attend to that. You go to the platform at once. If you need me call out and I 'll come."

Charley sprang to the platform, and was none too soon. The negroes outside, hearing the cries of their imprisoned companion, were already trying to make their way within the enclosure. One of them having climbed upon the shoulders of another, had taken hold of the top of the stockade, and in another second would have drawn himself up. In that case the boys would have had to encounter him on equal terms, and perhaps another squatter would have been over the wall by that time. Luckily the light from the burning tar revealed the situation to Charley in an instant. Running along the platform to the point of danger, he rapped the knuckles of the climber with a degree of violence which at once ended his climbing. He dropped to the ground as if his hands had been cut off at the wrists, and then Charley began offensive measures. Throwing his clubs one after another—for a large supply of them had been stored along the platform—he compelled

ıssailants to beat a retreat. They threw some
; at him in return, but he managed to dodge
, and Jack joining him for a few minutes, the
fairly drove the assailants off. Then Jack re-
:d to his task of protecting the boat, while
ley, promenading all the way around the barrier,
guard against surprises.

› further assault being made, and the fire gradu-
dying down until the boat was no longer in
er, Jack and Charley had time to think of Ned
ı, and their anxiety was intense.

\t least we 've got a hostage," said Jack, "and
ıps poor Ned will be able to arrange for an ex-
ge. At any rate I hope so. There must be
: of them who can speak English, and, besides,
understands their jargon a little."

Vell, we 'll hope for the best," said Charley,
ought n't we to make another effort to find
?"

don't see what we can do," said Jack. "They've
ed him off by this time, and to follow in the
would be useless."

Yes, that 's true. Listen! What was that?"

ck listened, but could hear nothing.

"What did you hear?" asked he.

"I thought I heard Ned shout."

Jack gave a loud, long call, and then the two listened again. A shout in reply was this time distinctly heard.

"That 's Ned," said Charley.

"Yes," answered Jack. "He 's making all the trouble he can, I suppose, to delay their march and give us time to catch up. Come, Charley, we *must* rescue him."

Again the boys sallied out, this time through the western gate. They ran along the shore, stopping occasionally to halloo and to listen for Ned's replies, which came promptly now.

"They are n't getting on very fast with him," said Jack; "we 're gaining on them at any rate."

Again the boys ran. When they made their next pause to shout, they were astonished to hear Ned cry out, in his natural voice, from no great distance:

"Is every thing burnt up?"

Strangely enough the voice seemed to come from the water on the right, and both Jack and Charley were bewildered by the fact.

Vhere on earth are you?" called Jack.
Iere," answered Ned, "out here on the oyster

e moon was near the zenith, and by carefully ing the sea the boys could make out the figure ed, standing knee-deep in water, about fifty from shore. What to make of the situation did not know.
Vhat are you doing out there, Ned?" cried

'm waiting for the tide to go down. Never me, but tell me about the fire. Did it burn oat?"
Io, only the tar in the vat and our hut. The is safe, and so is the stockade."
Iow did it catch fire?"
Vhy, the squatters set it afire while we were out ng for you."
Iave they been there, then?"
Yes. Have n't they had you prisoner?"
Iot a bit of it. But don't stand there talking. ack and take care of the camp. When the tide down I 'll return. Hurry now, or those rascals get in again and burn the boat."

"But what in the world——"

"Never mind that now. Go on to camp. You've no time to lose. I 'll make explanations when I get there."

The necessity for hurrying back was plain enough, and so, without further delay, Jack and Charley started toward the camp at a brisk trot.

CHAPTER XX.

A CALCULATION OF PROFIT AND LOSS.

WHEN they arrived at camp Jack and Charley found every thing as they had left it, ɔt that their prisoner was gone. Examination ed that he had gnawed the rope with which he ɔeen bound, and thus had set himself free.

first the boys were disposed to regard this as ;hap, but a moment's reflection convinced them ɛir error.

Iow that we know that Ned is safe," said ey, "we have no use for that rascal. We d have set him free in the morning at any

}y the way," said Jack, "what do you make of s performance?"

can't make it out at all," said Charley.

Ie must have been cut off from camp by the

squatters and forced to take refuge out there on the oyster reef."

"No, the squatters came from the other direction, don't you remember? And, besides, Ned did n't know there had been any of them about until we told him."

"I 'll explain all that for myself," said Ned from the outside, "if you 'll be good enough to take down the gate log and let me in."

This was quickly done, and Ned entered, first pushing in the cast net well filled with fish. As he straightened himself up a glad "hurrah!" came from both his companions, who saw in his hands a turtle weighing at least twenty-five pounds.

"Hurrah! Now we shall have a taste of meat again. Where did you get that fine fellow, Ned?"

"On the oyster reef," answered Ned; "that 's how I came to be out there."

"Well, tell us all about it now."

"Oh, there is n't a great deal to tell. When I left camp, I went down along the shore to the east and caught a few fish, but not many. Then I determined to try the other side of the camp. I strung my fish on a limber switch and came back,

ıding to leave them here before going on; but passed I saw that the gate was closed, so I ed around without bothering you fellows, and on toward the west. I fished along at one and another, and finally I got to fishing in the ow water between the oyster reef and the shore, e the mullets seemed to be holding a public ing or something of that sort. The tide was hen, though it was coming in, and the oyster was out of water. Finding that my switches full of fish, and being nearer the reef than the , I thought I 'd just take a look over the reef e if I could find a small turtle. I had seen one here several days ago, and my mouth watered r a piece of meat that the thought of turtle me wild. So, swinging my strings of fish my neck, I crept about in the moonlight—for ıoon showed a little through the trees by that —and after a pretty thorough search I spied this scrambling along over the oyster bed. It ed, from the slow progress he made, that the hurt his bare feet as much as they did mine; ıat was probably only in appearance, for when ıw me creeping up on him he made better

time, and if I had n't been so bent upon having some meat for breakfast, he would have got away. As it was I forgot my bare feet long enough to catch the gentleman. Then I tried to go ashore, but the tide had come up and I could n't. That is to say, I could n't wade ashore, and to swim was to lose my turtle; so I made up my mind to stick it out till the tide turned. I had to stand in water up to my waist at high tide, but I did n't mind that. I was n't worried till I saw the blaze here at camp, and heard you fellows yelling. I answered, but you stopped calling, so I supposed it was all right. I waited two or three hours longer, till the blaze began to die down. Then you fellows began calling again, and you came to me. You know the rest. I came ashore as soon after you left as the water would let me. Now tell me all about matters here. Where 's your prisoner?"

The boys soon recounted the adventures of the night.

"What is the measure of damage?" Ned asked when the story was ended.

"The hut is destroyed," said Charley; "and the tar," added Jack. "We can make another hut in an

hour, but the destruction of the tar just as we were ready to use it is a more serious matter."

"Yes, it will delay us a couple of days longer with the boat," said Ned, "and that 's a pity. Let 's see, this is Wednesday morning—for it 's nearly daybreak now. If this had n't happened we might have got away from here by next Wednesday, —just four weeks from the day we came. Now, however, we shan't get away before the Friday or Saturday following."

"Well, that will be the appointed time," said Charley.

"The appointed time?" asked Ned, "what do you mean?"

"Why, don't you remember? You told Maum Sally we 'd be gone a month, and she warned you not to stay a day longer than that."

"Oh, yes, I forgot that! It will be curious, won't it if we get away Saturday? I had n't the least thought of staying a week when we came."

"Nor I," said Jack. "If we had suspected what were coming to we never would have come at all I imagine."

"I don't know about that," said Charley, doubt-

fully. "We came for adventures, and we 've had them, if I know what such things are. And we 've really had a good deal of fun."

"That 's true," said Ned; "we could n't expect to sleep on feather beds, or to have much luxury of any kind on such an expedition. And, after all, our little hardships have n't hurt us. My foot is about well now, and your dog-bite, Charley, is in a fair way to heal. So, if we get away safely we 're all the better for the trip. It will all seem like fun when we get back to school and think about it."

"I dare say we 've sharpened our wits a trifle too," said Jack. "We 've learned how to take care of ourselves in the woods, and we shall be a good deal quicker and sounder in our thinking for this experience."

"Well, it 's clear that we are not sufficiently sharpened up yet," said Charley, "or else some one of us would have seen before this precisely what the fire has done for us."

"What is it, Charley?"

"Why, every grain of rice that we had in the world was in the hut, and of course it is all burnt up."

"The mischief!" exclaimed Ned.

"That 's a calamity," added Jack, "but we must get more to-day."

"Yes," said Ned, "if the squatters have n't gathered it all."

"Don't let us meet trouble half way," said Jack; "it will be time enough to give up the rice when we find that we can't get it. Meantime, let 's have some turtle steak for breakfast. Then we 'll see what is to be done."

In spite of the lack of rice and all other substitutes for bread, the boys enjoyed the broiled turtle more than any thing they had eaten for a fortnight at least.

After breakfast they "scouted" a little, to make ure that there were none of the squatters on their ide of the island. Then Charley climbed a tall tree, ıe plan being that he should watch for squatters hile Ned and Jack should gather rice, so that they ight not be surprised at their work.

The rice had been cut, and very little remained of ; but here and there a little clump of it was still ınding in the grass and bushes around the patch, d a hard morning's work enabled the boys to se- re enough of these gleanings to last them for ten twelve days.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHARLEY'S SECRET EXPEDITION.

WHILE Charley sat in the tree-top scanning the island in search of possible squatters who might interfere with the gathering of the rice, he saw something else that put a new idea into his head, and before his watch was done he had quite made up his mind to do something brilliant which would surprise and delight his companions.

What he saw was nothing more remarkable than a calf, or rather a young bull, perhaps a year old, browsing in the edge of a thicket half a mile or more to the west of the camp, and not many hundreds of yards from the shore. There is nothing remarkable in such a sight as that, but the circumstances of this case were peculiar, and so the sight set Charley thinking.

In the first place, he remembered what Ned had

told him and Jack about the wild cattle on the island, and reflecting that it had been a good many years since the original stock of animals were abandoned, he could not help regarding this yearling bullock as something more than a mere bullock. It was game; a wild animal roaming at will over unoccupied lands, and to kill it would be quite as good sport as deer-stalking or bear-hunting.

Then, too, Charley and his companions were really in sore need of meat. An exclusive diet of fish, oysters, and other such things soon wearies the palate, and becomes exceedingly distasteful. It is true that Ned's turtle had somewhat broken this monotony, but the relief had been only partial, and the boys very eagerly craved meat—beef, mutton, or pork. They had made no effort to get such meat, only because they had no idea that any such was to be had.

The snake dinner had never been repeated. It is true that the snake was savory, and the boys had spoken truthfully when they declared themselves pleased with it. But that was while their hunger existed, and when they had finished they had no longer a keen appetite to oppose to prejudice, so

that, with full stomachs, the old objections returned, and all three boys were seized with a peculiar loathing for the food they had eaten. Perhaps it was only because they had eaten too much; but, whatever the reason was, the fact remained that they were all sickened by the thought of what they had eaten, and, while they said nothing about this feeling, no one of them ever proposed to repeat the experiment of eating snake.

Now Charley meant to have an abundance of meat against which no such objection could be urged. Here was a fat young steer whose beef was to be had for the taking. How to get it was at first a perplexing question. There was no gun with which to shoot the bullock, and there were no dogs in camp with which to chase it; but after some reflection Master Charley was confident that he could kill the animal with the means at disposal.

He said nothing about either his discovery or his purpose when his companions returned to camp, because he wished to give them a complete surprise.

He merely said that he wanted to make a little hunting expedition, and that perhaps he might succeed in knocking over a rabbit or some other animal

good to eat. His companions had little hope of any such good luck, but they offered no objection, and Charley, arming himself with the hunting-knife and the hatchet, set forth on his quest.

He found the bullock not far from the place at which he had seen it before, quietly browsing in the edge of the timber. After carefully reconnoitring the position, Charley went into the woods and crept upon the animal very cautiously through the thick undergrowth. His plan was to creep up in this way until he should be within a few feet of his prey, and then, springing forward suddenly, to strike the bullock between his young horns with the hatchet. Charley had seen a butcher kill a large steer by a comparatively slight blow, delivered at the right place on the animal's head, and he was very sure that he knew where to strike.

As he crept up he carefully avoided making any kind of noise, but when within a dozen feet of the place from which he meant to spring, he made a misstep, broke a stick, and alarmed the bullock, which quietly trotted away.

Charley was disappointed, but by no means disheartened. He had only to begin over again, and

proceed more cautiously next time. He crept very slowly and consumed nearly half an hour in his approach. This time he broke no sticks and made no noise of any kind. Nearer and nearer he drew. He could hear the bullock's breathing, but still he must get nearer. A log lay just in front of him, and he could not well spring over it before striking, without alarming the animal and missing his aim. He must creep around this obstruction first, and this he did successfully, but the bullock, though not alarmed, moved away just before Charley reached a position from which to strike. It did not run, but quietly walked away to nibble some grass which grew at a spot a dozen paces distant.

This second disappointment shook Charley's already strained nerves considerably, but, impatient as he now was, he controlled himself and resumed his silent advance. Luckily the animal's head was turned directly away from him, and that fact greatly lessened the danger of his discovery. His chance was now so good, indeed, that a few moments more might have brought his attempt to a completely successful issue, if he had been content to follow his original plan. But just as he was in the act of

springing forward to deliver his blow, with every prospect of success, a new thought struck Charley. It was easy to spring upon the bullock's back, and from that point Charley thought he could deal not one, but many successive blows, thus making sure work of what might not otherwise be sure.

Accordingly he leaped upon the animal's back, and as he did so the startled creature sprang forward through the bushes, nearly unseating his rider. The blow which Charley tried to deliver was a disastrous failure. He missed the brute's head, and the hatchet slipping from his hand, was hurled into the thicket.

Charley had no time to think of the hatchet, however. The infuriated bullock plunged headlong through the thicket and then across an open glade and into the woods again, going in the direction of the camp, and Charley had all that he could do to keep his seat. He was beaten black and blue by the saplings encountered; his face was scratched, and his clothes torn almost to shreds. Still, seeing that the bullock was going toward the camp, he held on, with an unreasoning impression that, once at the camp, the animal would be secured.

Jack and Ned happened to be outside the stockade when Charley came dashing past, but of course they could do nothing, and a moment after they caught sight of their companion, he was swept from his seat by an overhanging branch of a tree, and the frightened bullock continued his impetuous flight alone.

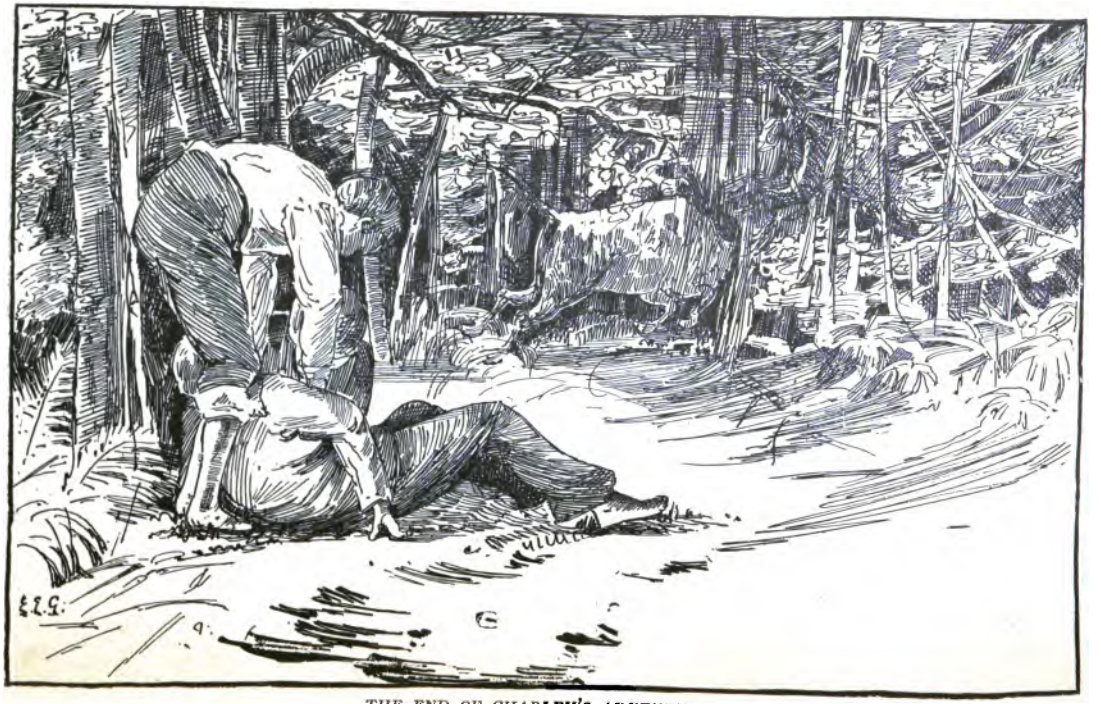
Jack and Ned hastened to their friend's assistance. For a moment Charley seemed stunned, but he soon came to himself sufficiently to ask in a querulous tone :

" Why did n't you head him off? "

It was not easy to convince Charley that they had been entirely powerless to capture the bullock, so fixed had been his determination to secure so valuable a prize ; but after a while he began to see matters in their true light, and to understand that Ned and Jack could not have stopped the animal, even if they had been prepared for his coming, as in fact they were not.

Then Charley examined his own bruises, which were pretty severe, though no bones were broken.

" The worst of the damage," he said, after awhile, " is the loss of the hatchet, and I suppose we shall find that."



THE END OF CHARLEY'S ADVENTURE.

"Did you lose the hunting-knife too?" asked Jack.

"There!" exclaimed Charley; "what an idiot I am, to be sure! I had that in my belt all the time, and I might have got the beef if I had only thought to use it!"

This was true enough. While going through the thicket, Charley had enough to do to cling to the back of the bullock, but while crossing the open glade he might easily have drawn and used the long hunting-knife if he had thought of it. But he had not thought of it, and it was now too late for the thinking to do any good.

"It is just as well as it is," said Ned.

"Just as well!" exclaimed Charley; "well, I don't see that. I don't know how it is with you, but for my part, I 'd relish a beefsteak just now."

"So would I," answered Ned; "but that yearling is n't ours, and we 've no right to kill it, I suppose."

"Why not? it 's a wild animal, is n't it?"

"I hardly think so. The squatters must have killed all the wild cattle long ago, and this tame calf probably belongs to them."

"Well, they helped themselves pretty freely to

our things, so I should n't be a bit sorry if I had killed the animal while I thought it a wild one," said Charley, rather ruefully.

The search for the hatchet was a somewhat protracted one, but that important tool was found at last, and so, if Charley's effort to replenish the camp larder did no good, it at least did no harm beyond bruising that young huntsman's limbs, scratching his face, and tearing his clothes.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAUNCH OF THE "APHRODITE."

CONTRARY to their expectations, the boys were left in peace by their enemies after that last unsuccessful attempt to burn their camp.

The tar-kiln was promptly rebuilt, and by Saturday night a new supply of tar was ready. Early on Monday morning the work of converting this tar into pitch, by boiling it, was begun. This was necessarily a slow process, because the kettle was small and the space to be covered was large, for the plan was to paint the whole outside surface of the boat with the pitch, in order to make it as water-tight as possible. As soon as the first kettleful of pitch was ready, it was carefully applied while smoking hot, care being taken to work it well into the seams. Then another kettleful was set to boil, and so the work went slowly forward. As the pitch

cooled it became hard, like varnish, and the effect was to stop all leaks pretty thoroughly.

At first the boat sat right side up, but raised upon the blocks on which she had been built, so that it was easy to pass under her; but in applying the first kettleful of pitch the boys discovered the awkwardness of this position, and determined to turn the *Aphrodite* bottom upward, for the sake of convenience. This was a difficult task, as the boat was too heavy for the combined strength of the three young ship-builders; but it was necessary to accomplish it, and Jack's mechanical skill devised means for the purpose. Cutting some long poles to serve as levers, and a large number of short, stout sticks, he directed his companions to raise one side of the boat with the levers. While they held it up he quickly built two cribs of the short sticks, one at the bow and the other at the stern, and when the levers were removed the boat rested easily upon these. Then a new bight was taken with the levers, and the side of the boat was raised a few inches further. Building the cribs up to support her in this position, Jack directed the boys to repeat the operation again and again, each time supporting the boat

by increasing the height of the cribs. Finally he said:

"Now one more bight will throw her over, but we must get ready first to ease her down, or else we shall strain her."

"How can we do it?" asked Ned.

"By setting some poles up at an angle on cribs. I 'll show you."

With that he went to the other side of the boat and built some cribs about five or six feet away from the gunwale on which the boat rested; carrying these up as high as his head, he took a number of straight poles and placed their ends on the ground just under the gunwale, resting the other ends upon the tall cribs. This made a slanting framework, the bottom of which was against one gunwale, while the top was not more than a few feet distant from the other edge of the boat.

"Now," he said, when this was done, "she has only to fall a foot or two forward; her weight will be on her face then, and we 'll ease her down by drawing out the crib-sticks."

"I see a better way than that," said Ned.

"Very well. What is it?"

"Let 's throw her forward first; then I 'll show you."

Resting, as the boat was, almost upon her gunwale, it was easy to push her forward, and when that was done she was a little more than half-way over.

"Now," said Ned, "instead of lowering that upper gunwale, let 's lift the lower one with the levers, and block it up. We need n't raise it more than a foot; then she 'll show her whole under-side to us just as well as if she lay flat on her face."

"Yes," said Jack, after studying the matter, "and it will be all the easier to turn her back again."

"Have we got to turn her back again?" asked Charley, whose arms and back had been pretty severely taxed in the effort to reverse the position of the boat.

"Well, no," said Ned, "not if we can make up our minds to launch her, bottom upward, and to ride back to Bluffton on her keel. Otherwise we must turn her right side up before we launch her."

"It won't be hard to turn her back, Charley," said Jack. "She 'll be nearly on edge, you see, and it won't require lifting—only a little pushing. But

come, let 's raise this gunwale. Six inches will do, I think."

One more application of the levers served the purpose, and the work of applying the pitch was resumed.

No other difficult problem presented itself, and by noon on Thursday the pitching was complete. Before turning the *Aphrodite* back again, Jack and his companions cut some long, straight poles, and made an inclined plane of them from the blocks on which the boat rested to the water. They removed all the bark from these poles, so that they should be as smooth as possible.

Then the boat was turned back into position, her side toward the water. It was necessary now to lift her up until her keel should rest upon the inclined plane, down which she was to slide, of her own weight, into the sea. This was a somewhat difficult task, requiring the use of the levers and a good deal of blocking up as the levers raised the boat, inch by inch. It was accomplished at last, however, and, suffering neither strain nor other injury, the *Aphrodite* slipped into the sea, and rode gracefully upon the water.

"Three cheers for the new boat!" cried Charley, and with a will they were given.

"Now, then," said Ned, "we can begin to see the end of our adventures. Let 's see. We 've only to make some oars, and then we can be off."

"When shall we start?" asked Jack.

"Well, this is Thursday evening. We can finish three oars—two for rowing and one for steering—by to-morrow evening."

"Then we can make an early start on Saturday morning," said Jack.

"Not very well," said Ned. "The tide will be against us until about one o'clock or half-past, and the *Aphrodite* is too heavy for two oars against tide."

"Why can't all three row?" asked Charley, who persistently refused to understand any thing about the management of boats.

"Because then we should have two oars on one side and only one on the other, and we 'd go around in a circle. We can only use two oars, while the odd fellow steers. We 'll be able to rest in that way, too, by taking the steering-oar turn and turn about."

"Then we 'll get away when the tide turns on Saturday," said Jack.

"Yes, or a little before,—say at noon. That will give us plenty of time."

"And we 'll get back to Bluffton," said Charley, "exactly at the time appointed with Maum Sally, I wonder if she 'll have some supper ready for us."

"If she don't she 'll have to get some pretty quick," said Ned. "I won't let her scold me till she sets supper before us, and she won't be happy till she gives me a good 'settin' to rights,' as she calls it."

"Had n't we better wait until we get to Bluffton before we order that supper?" said Jack; "there 's 'many a slip,' you know."

"What a croaker you 're getting to be, Jack!" exclaimed Charley. "What 's to bother us now, I 'd like to know? We 've got a good boat, we can make oars to-morrow, and Ned knows the way."

"Oh, certainly!" replied Jack. "I suppose we shall get there safely, and I 'm not in the least disposed to croak. I only thought that you and Ned were a trifle hasty in your assumption that every thing is to go perfectly smooth with us. For the last

month things have had a pretty fixed habit of going the other way."

"Well, but we 've conquered our difficulties now, and there 's nothing that I can think of to stand in the way of our getting off at the appointed time. And if we leave here at noon on Saturday, what can happen to prevent our arrival at Bluffton that evening?"

"I 'm sure I don't know," said Jack; "nothing at all, I hope. But when I think what a chapter of accidents we 've been through, I am disposed to wait till I see Maum Sally, before I get my mouth ready for the supper she 's to cook."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VOYAGE OF THE "APHRODITE."

SATURDAY dawned soft and warm. After breakfast the boys cooked the few provisions that remained, intending to eat their mid-day meal in the boat, as a mere luncheon, and to satisfy their appetites with better food of Maum Sally's preparing, when they should arrive at Bluffton.

They filled the coffee-pot with drinking water—for the water kegs of the *Red Bird* had been lost in that boat's mishap,—and bestowed their other scant belongings on board. The moment that the outgoing tide grew slack they began their homeward voyage, giving the old camp three lusty, farewell cheers, and parting with their old associations there with a touch of real regret.

For the first mile or two Ned and Jack were at the oars. Then Charley relieved Ned, as the boat

drew out from among the low-lying marsh islands into a broad stretch of water.

The wind was blowing in from the sea, not strongly, but steadily, and after an hour's rowing Jack saw that Ned was rather uneasily watching some light, low-flying banks of mist which were scudding along overhead.

"What is it, Ned?" he asked.

"Nothing of importance—or at least I hope so."

"Well, what is it? Do those little clouds mean rain?"

"I wish they did," said Ned; "but they 're not clouds, at least in the usual sense, and I 'm afraid they don't mean rain."

"Out with it. We 're partners in all our joys and sorrows," said Charley, "so let 's hear all about the clouds that are n't clouds but something else. What are they?"

"A sea fog," answered Ned; "this breeze is coming in from the sea laden with moisture, and those clouds just above us are banks of fog."

"Well, what of it?"

"We shall be shut in in five minutes," said Ned. "Look! you can't see half a mile now, and it is set-

tling right down upon us, growing thicker every minute."

It was as Ned said. The wall of thick fog was closing in, and it was already impossible to see any thing except the waste of water around them. A few minutes later even the water could be seen for only a few yards around.

"Lie on your oars, boys," said Ned.

"Why not row on?" asked Charley.

"Because I don't know which way to steer, and rowing may only take us out of our course."

"Can't you hold your course straight ahead?"

"No. That would be possible in a fog if rowing always drove a boat straight ahead, and if there were no cross currents in the water; but both 'ifs' stand in the way. Without a compass nobody can keep a boat in any thing like a straight course in such a fog. The tide is running up, and so if we don't row at all we shall drift in the right direction, at least in a general way, while if we row, we may go all wrong."

"How long is such a fog likely to last?" asked Jack.

"It is impossible to tell. A change in the wind

or in the state of the atmosphere may clear it away at any moment; or it may last a week."

"A week!" exclaimed Charley; "what shall we do if it does? We have n't an ounce of food left, and only a little water," looking into the coffee-pot.

"We need n't manage the whole week this afternoon," said Jack. "It will be better to keep cool and do the best thing that can be done every minute. Just now, Ned says, the best thing is to drift with the tide, so we 'll drift, and wait, and keep our wits about us so as to see any chance that offers for doing better."

Jack spoke in a cheerful voice, and his tone of courage served to brace his companions somewhat, but it was plain to all three that their position was really one of great danger and uncertainty. It was Jack's excellent habit, however, to grow strong and courageous in difficulty or danger; he never allowed himself to become panic-stricken, or to do foolish, frantic things.

"Jack," said Charley after a while, "I don't believe there 's any whine in you."

"I don't know," replied Jack; "I hope there is n't. What good would whining do?"

An hour passed, and still the fog grew thicker. Another hour; the breeze had ceased to blow, and the gray mist lay like a blanket over the water. It seemed piled in thick layers, one on top of another. It was so dense that it could be seen floating between one of the boys and another, like smoke from a cigar. The boys could see its slow writhing and twisting in the still air, moved as it was only by their breath, or by the occasional movements of their bodies. It would have been impossible in such a fog to see a ship twenty feet distant.

For still another hour and another the boys sat still in the boat, rarely speaking or in any way breaking the awful silence of the fog-bound solitude.

At last Ned bent his head down close to the gunwale to scan the surface of the water.

"I see marsh grass here," he said, "but it is completely under water. Watch for any that shows above the surface, and if you see any catch hold of it and hold on."

The boys bent over, one on one side, the other on the other. Presently the protruding tops of the tall marsh grass appeared above the water, and seemed to float slowly by. Several times Jack and Charley

caught small bunches of it, but the impetus of the drifting boat was too great, and the grass was pulled up from the muddy bottom. After a little while, the water growing shallower, the grass showed higher above the surface, while it increased also in quantity, impeding the motion of the boat. Then each of the boys seized a bunch and the boat was brought to a stand.

"There, that 's better," said Ned, as the motion of the boat ceased.

"Why don't you want to drift?" asked Jack.

"Because it is about the turn of the tide," answered Ned, "and I don't want to drift in the wrong direction."

"Then why did n't you cast anchor when you first saw from the grass that we were in shallow water?"

"Because I don't want to be caught here on a marsh island if I can help it."

"I don't understand," said Jack.

"Well, you see it is about high tide now, and we have drifted upon one of the many mud banks covered with this marsh grass. Some of them are covered with water at high tide, as this one is, but

quite bare when the tide is out. When I saw that we were drifting over one I wanted to stop the boat, to avoid being carried back again toward the sea; but we 're in danger of getting left here high and dry on a mud bank when the tide runs out, and that would be a bad fix to get into. So instead of dropping anchor, we 'll simply hold on by the grass, and as the tide goes out we 'll try to work off into deeper water."

"I see," said Jack.

"I wish I could, then," said Charley, who had recovered his spirits; "if I could see I 'd steer for Bluffton."

"Come, Charley," said Ned, "this is no joking matter, I can assure you. It 's growing quite dark now, and unless the fog lifts very soon we may be stuck here in the mud, for the night at least; suppose you give her a few stokes with the oars, boys; the tide is falling rapidly, and we must get off this bank."

The boys rowed slowly, Ned steering and watching the water. It grew steadily shallower, so he turned the boat about, convinced that the direction he had taken was toward the centre of the bank, instead of toward the deep water. He had not

gone far in the new direction however, before the keel scraped the mud, and another change had to be made in the course. Still the keel scraped, in whatever direction he turned.

"Pull away with all your might, boys!" he cried; "if we don't reach deep water in five minutes we 're stuck!"

Jack and Charley bent to their oars, and for a few minutes the boat slipped forward through the tall marsh grass. But her keel was dragging in the soft mud, and as the tide was rapidly running out, the boat sank deeper every minute.

"Pull away, as hard as you can!" cried Ned, seeing that the speed was rapidly growing less. "Here, you 're exhausted, Jack; let me take your oar. Now, Charley, give it to her!"

The oarsmen bent to their work with the strength of desperation, but the keel was now completely buried in the mud, and the whole bottom of the boat rested in the slimy ooze. Do what they would, the boys could drive her no further.

"Stuck!" cried Jack.

"Yes, stuck, fairly stuck, and in for a night of it, fog or no fog," said Ned.

"What 's to be done?" asked Charley.

"Nothing now, except go to sleep if we can. It 's so cold and raw that we 'll find that pretty hard work. I wish we had brought a lot of moss for blankets."

"But what if the fog lifts in the night?" asked Charley.

"Well, what if it does? We can do nothing now till the tide comes in to-morrow morning. We 're high and dry now, and the tide will continue to run out until one or two o'clock to-night. Then it will turn, but we shan't be afloat again till very nearly high tide,—say about seven or eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Yes," said Jack, "and as we have eaten nearly nothing since morning, and have nothing to eat till we get to Bluffton, we shall need all the strength we can get from sleep. So let 's sleep if we can."

Bestowing themselves as comfortably as they could, the three worn-out, half-famished lads did their best to sleep; but there was very little chance of that. No sooner had they ceased to exert themselves, than the penetrating cold of the fog, which

had already saturated their scanty clothing, made them shiver and shake as with an ague fit.

They were obliged occasionally to go to the oars for exercise, in order to keep their blood in circulation, and so there was no chance of any thing like sleep beyond an occasional cat nap. Not long before dawn it began to rain, and Ned, who had been dozing, suddenly sprang up, crying out :

" What 's that? rain? Good!"

" Why, 'good'?" asked Charley, shivering; " I 'm damp enough already."

" Good, because if it rains hard the fog will disappear."

" Why?"

" Because it will be converted into rain, and fall. A fog disappears always either by rising and floating away, or by falling in the shape of rain; and this one means to fall, I should say, if I may judge by the way it is coming down now."

It had, indeed, begun to pour. The condition of the boys was thus rendered still more uncomfortable than before, but at least their prospects were brightened by way of compensation, and as the steady downpour cleared the air of the dense fog, their

spirits bounded up again in spite of all the discomforts of their situation.

"I say, Jack," said Charley, "are you a prophet or a weather witch?"

"Neither, so far as I am informed," replied Jack; "why do you ask?"

"Only because I suspect that you either foresaw this fog or created it."

"I don't see the force of your suspicion," said Jack.

"Don't you remember how you croaked about slips between the cup and the lip when Ned and I were so sure of getting to Bluffton?"

"Yes, of course; but I did n't really expect anything of this nature. I only spoke generally."

"Out of the abundance of your wisdom. But I won't make fun, for you were right."

"And, besides," said Ned, "the situation just now is n't a bit funny. There 's a young river running down my back, and I 'm in for a good scolding from Maum Sally when I see her. She 'll scold me for overstaying my time, for wrecking the boat, for losing my boots, for spoiling my clothes, and for every thing else she can think of. And yet, though you 'll hardly believe it, I heartily wish I could be sure of getting that scolding very early this morning."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MAUM SALLY.

DAYLIGHT came about five o'clock, and Ned made use of the earliest light for looking about him and determining his position. So buried was the boat in the tall marsh grass, that he had to stand upon the highest part of the bow in order to see at all. At first he could make out very little, but as it grew lighter—for, the rain having ceased, the light gained rapidly toward six o'clock—he was able to make out the bearings pretty well.

"I say, fellows," he said, turning to his companions, "we made a centre shot. If we had tried, in the broadest light of the clearest day, we could n't have put the *Aphrodite* more exactly in the middle of this marsh bank."

Further inspection showed that this judgment was accurate. The boat lay precisely in the middle of the

little island, which stretched away two or three hundred yards on each side.

The tide had risen enough by half-past six for the water to lick the sides of the boat, but it would be a full hour or more before the *Aphrodite* would float up out of the mud, and even then it would be necessary to wait awhile longer for deeper water, before trying to push her great bulk through the rank marsh grass.

"Why not hurry matters by getting out and pushing the empty boat?" asked impatient Charley, who had already declared himself to be in a state of actual starvation.

"Just take one of the oars, Charley," said Ned, "and feel of the bottom we should have to walk on."

Charley took the oar, pushed it through the roots of the grass, and then, with scarcely an effort, plunged its whole length straight downward through the soft mud.

"Ya—as, I see," he drawled, as he drew the oar out again; "it is n't precisely the sort of lawn that one would choose for walking about on in slippers."

Just then oars were heard, and looking in the

direction from which the sound came, Ned suddenly cried out:

"Hi! Maum Sally! Hi there! here we are, out here in the marsh!" Then turning to his companions, he said:

"It's Maum Sally in the little boat. I wonder where she 's going this early on Sunday morning."

Maum Sally did not leave him long in doubt on this head. Rowing her boat as far into the grass and as near to them as she could, she came to a stop at about a hundred and fifty yards from the *Aphrodite*. Then standing up in her boat, placing her bare arms akimbo, and tossing her red-turbaned head back, she began:

"Now, look heah, young Ned! what you mean by dis heah sort o' doins? Did n't you promise me faithful to be back agin in a month? An' ain't de month done gone, an' heah you is a idlin' about on a ma'sh, an' it Sunday mawnin' too? Jes' you come straight 'long home now."

After she had spent her first breath in a tirade which was half scolding and half coddling,—for that was always her way with Ned, whom she had spoiled all his life, from the cradle upward,—she

"HI! MAUM SALLY!"

paused long enough for Ned to explain that he and his companions could not go to her until the tide should rise at least a foot more.

"Now listen, boys," he said; "she 'll keep it up till the rising tide brings her to us, and we 're in for an hour of it."

"Why not persuade her to go back and get breakfast ready by the time we get there?" asked Jack.

"Go back? Not she. My month was up yesterday, and as I didn't put in an appearance, she set out to find me and bring me home this morning, and you just bet she won't go home without me. She 'll row this way as fast as the rising water will let her, and she 'll keep on scolding and coddling me all the time. Then she 'll jump in here and hug me as if I were her long-lost baby boy. Hear her!"

Maum Sally fulfilled Ned's prediction to the letter. As she drew nearer, and made out the forlorn condition of the young Crusoes, discovering, little by little, how ragged they were, she scolded more and more savagely, while Ned laughed and heartily enjoyed it all, taking pains to direct her attention to the various losses he had sustained, and hinting now and then at the difficulties he had en-

countered and the dangers he had passed. Each word of his gave Maum Sally a new theme for her scolding, and as the little boat pushed itself up to the big one she leaped from the one into the other, changing her tone, manner, and expression in the very middle of a sentence, somewhat thus:

"I tell you, young Ned, ef I gits my han's on you, you ugly, provokin', no 'count young scape—darlin', blessed boy, aint ole Sally happy to git her arms roun' you agin, and hug you jis like you was a baby agin; an' now I 's got you safe in these arms agin, I tell you I 's happy."

The sudden change in the sentence occurred just as Maum Sally stepped from one boat into the other, and fell upon Ned with that savage fury of affection which only a dear old black nurse can feel.

To row out of the marsh when the water grew a little deeper, and then to row home to a late but toothsome breakfast, was easy enough now. Then a long day of complete rest followed, and the whole story of the wreck of the *Red Bird* was a memory merely.

THE END.

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